THE WISH~FULFILLING GOLDEN SUN OF THE MAHAYANA THOUGHT TRAINING

by

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(The greatest simpleton amongst
all the followers of Guru Shakyamuni)

MEDITATION

1. We should check within before checking externally

People the world over believe that happiness depends on and is derived from external factors. The Dharma teaches that everything is created by mind and that to understand and solve problems we should check within our minds before checking externally. To do so correctly, we need the various experiences of the Graduated Path to Enlightenment.

We should look in a mirror to see if our face is clean or not. Then we should use an effective method, such as soap and water, to clean the dirty face, and not try to do it by breaking or enlarging the mirror. Since infinite time we have been trying to resolve problems through external instead of mental methods: it is impossible to find relief in this way.

2. The posture during meditation

There are seven physical disciplines to be observed while we meditate in the sitting position. By placing the body in this posture as taught by the great Guru Marpa, we leave a deep impression on the mind, and this prepares us for the achievement of Enlightenment in the essence of the Dhyana Buddha, Vairocana (*Nam.nang*)—the Buddha of the fully-purified skandha of form.

a. The best way to sit is in the full-lotus position (vajrasana).

   The buttocks are on a flat cushion and the legs crossed, with the dorsum of each foot lying on the opposite thigh. If this is impossible, then the half-lotus position (padmasana)—left foot on the floor and right foot on left thigh—should be assumed, and if this cannot be done then Green Tara's posture—both feet on the floor—is acceptable. In all cases the right leg is crossed in front of the left.

   If we can manage none of these then we should just cross the legs as comfortably as possible, but our posture should always be respectful as we are in the presence of the Buddha. Leaning back against the wall, for instance, is disrespectful.

b. The hands rest lightly in front of the body, the left lying palm upward on the lap and the back of the right on the upturned left palm. The hands are open and the fingers together; The thumb-tips meet above the palm. The arms are relaxed and slightly rounded, and held a little way away from the body.

c. The back must be kept straight—this is very important. Not only does it prevent back-ache but also the mind becomes clearer and more alert; there are less distractions and it is easier to meditate. This is because the nadis are also kept straight.

d. The eyes should be half-closed, and the gaze should be directed down the line of the nose towards its tip. If the eyes are completely closed we may

become sleepy and sluggish, but we can close them if it is disturbing not to do so.

e. The jaw is relaxed and the teeth slightly apart. The lips are together.

f. The tip of the tongue touches the back of the upper teeth. This becomes very useful later in our practice—as the mind is held in concentration the flow of saliva increases, so with the tongue in this position there is no need to swallow frequently.

g. The neck is slightly bent forward. But, if bent too much, sinking and sluggishness will arise, and if kept straight, there may be scattering, agitation and distraction.

3. The mind during meditation

a. The agitated mind

Sometimes our mind is scattered, unable to hold the object of concentration and distracted by superstitions (delusions) in the form of disturbing thoughts and images. To cheat and relax this restless mind we can use one of two methods.

i. Suppressing all other thoughts, we concentrate fully on our breath:

We breathe in through the right nostril and out through the left, three times.

We breathe in through the left nostril and out through the right, three times.

We breathe in and out through both nostrils together, three times.

Having quieted our mind in this way we commence the meditation.

ii. We visualise that our mind is enclosed within a round seed, the size of a mustard seed (o), which is divided into two hemispheres, the upper white and lower red, and situated in the central nadi at the height of the navel. We concentrate on this until our mind is quiet, and can then commence the meditation.

This is a method used by Tibetan yogis.

b. The drowsy mind

When our mind is sluggish and we experience sinking, unclear or dark visualisation or lack of energy to concentrate, we can visualise that our mind is enclosed within a small bean in the central nadi at the height of the navel. This is then shot upwards through the central nadi, which is seen as a transparent glass tube, and, like an arrow, is ejected from the body through the crown of the head. The bean opens and our mind is released to become one with all-encompassing space. We concentrate on this for some time and can then return to the meditation.

This is a special technique used by the great Tibetan yogi *P'a.d'am.pa sang.gyä*.

4. Since we always desire to profit and never desire to lose we should understand the extreme importance of being motivated by the right impulse.

Before trying to perform any virtuous action we should check our mind. Virtuous actions create Enlightenment and invirtuous actions create samsara: such actions are created by the mind; therefore, Enlightenment and samsara are also mentally dependent.

What sort of mind is responsible for invirtuous actions? It is the negative mind, that which is greedy, ignorant or angry, attached to the happiness of the temporal life. And so it is this mind that only ties us to continual samsaric suffering and causes us to fall into the suffering of the three lower realms.

But the mind that is not greedy, ignorant or angry is detached from temporal happiness, is pure and virtuous. This mind is the creator of supreme happiness, the utmost, right and perfect Enlightenment; any action it creates is virtuous and the fundamental Dharma practice.

Many of us have no idea of these vital points in the practice of Dharma, and the way we practise is by thinking, "I am a yogi, I am Holy, I am perfect." This is like being burnt in a fire and running around in it instead of escaping.

For our practice to become a Mahayana practice, it is not enough that the Teaching is a Mahayana Teaching and that our actions are virtuous ones. We practitioners must become Mahayanists, and this means our mind must be possessed by the Mahayana thought—cherishing others while giving up ourselves. If our basic impulse is involved with the self-cherishing thought, even though it may be one of detachment from samsaric pleasure, it is still a lower, Hinayana thought.

The benefits of the Mahayana thought (Bodhicitta) are infinite. If this impulse motivates us to give just one bowl of food to a single animal, the benefits are incomparably greater than those derived from offering worlds full of jewels to each and every sentient being with a mind devoid of such motivation.

Therefore, we should check within our mind. If we find we are attached to and concerned with the comfort of the temporal life, then we should think as follows:

"Since beginningless time this evil thought has been cheating me and causing me to suffer in the circle of samsara. But now, for once, I have been born human and have received the perfect human rebirth; I have met the Mahayana Teachings and a Guru showing them. If I follow this evil thought I shall waste this present precious chance, and it will continuously cheat me and cause me to suffer in future lifetimes. Therefore, I should destroy this evil thought completely, making it absolutely non-existent, and finish with spiteful, deluded, distracted minds forever. I must make the definite decision that never again shall I allow myself to be controlled by such evil thoughts."

Then, breathing out through the right nostril, we visualise that these evil thoughts are expelled from our body in the form of black fog, passing beyond the farthest ocean and disappearing completely.

Breathing in through the left nostril, we visualise that the supreme Knowledge of the power, Wisdom and compassion and the blessings of the infinite Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Arhants and all the other Holy Beings—those who have transcended ordinary, worldly mentality—in the ten directions, enter our body in the form of pure, white light. Filled with their Knowledge and blessings, our mind and body experience infinite pleasure.

Concentrating on the breath, but breathing naturally, we do this three times. Then we repeat the exercise, inhaling through the right nostril and exhaling through the left three times. Finally, we repeat it three more times, breathing in and out through both nostrils together. While doing all this we should keep our mind as calm and as clear as possible.

5. Checking meditation

We, who lack the Wisdom of seeing the whole extensive concourse of the techniques of Dharma practice and who do not understand even what is meant by the practice of the Graduated Path, spend our time in ignorance, gossiping and wondering why we should need a Guru to explain the Teachings when there is a book that already does so.

But, to understand the Dharma correctly and to receive valid experiences, we must be shown the meditation techniques. A teacher is necessary for us to learn even basic handicrafts, so of course one is essential for us to train in the Path to Enlightenment. It is impossible to attain Buddhahood without a Guru.

The belief that any thought whatsoever is wrong, illusory and a disturbance to meditation and Enlightenment and should therefore be cut off is also a wrong conception. And another is the belief that checking meditation is required only while listening to discourses and not during meditation sessions.

If we spend our lives gossiping with such ideas in mind it is a terrible waste of time and the greatest hindrance to both our peace and our Enlightenment. If we are intelligent we can see that it is to our advantage to take care of our brain by not following these misconceptions.

The clever mind, wanting the easy, quick and perfect method of attaining Enlightenment, will follow Maitreya's instructions in the Teaching, *Do.da.gyen*:

> *At first, from listening correctly, understanding arises. Then, from becoming well-habituated in right understanding, the Transcendental Wisdom enabling realisation of right meaning arises.*

Therefore, no matter what the subject or method, we should listen to those who have experience and right understanding. Then we should obtain full understanding of the subject heard by reference to pure quotations and through the use of logical analysis. When, having listened to and checked the subject, we have no doubt that it is true, then we should make our mind habituated with it. This is called "meditation."

Buddhist meditation can be divided into two types: checking meditation and one pointed meditation. It is skilful to train in both, but many people of inferior intelligence suffer from the greatly illusory misconception that all meditation is that of one-pointedness. This belief is like that of the tourist who comes across a Tibetan whose name is “Lama,” who is married, drinks alcohol and makes business with statues and *t’ang.k’a’s*, and thinks that all Tibetan Lamas are like that.

The checking thought is extremely important in Dharma practice, whether Sutra or Tantra, just as it is necessary in temporal life—work and worldly politics. The three principal paths—fully renounced mind. Bodhicitta and right view (Shunyata)—are received through checking meditation. and without receiving them it is impossible to attain Enlightenment. This point has been shown clearly in all the Buddhist philosophical treatises from India and Tibet.

So, if we wish to receive the entire Graduated Path we must practice both types of meditation. Meditative Wisdom Arises from Thought Wisdom and Thought Wisdom arises from Listening Wisdom. Therefore it is important to first of all hear and then think about the correct subjects for the practice of meditation. As precious yogis have said: *He who meditates without first listening is like an armless rock-climber.*

Listening to the Dharma is a greatly beneficial activity. We use a mirror to inspect our face for ugly marks and to observe its beauty once blemishes have been removed. The correct way to listen to the Teachings is analogous to this. We should use what we hear and read to see clearly our mental garbage of wrong conceptions and vices so that we may get rid of them, making our mind pure and free.

The practice of the whole Graduated Path has three divisions, according to our level of intelligence:

1. The path of the beings of higher intelligence. This includes the Sutra path—the practice of the six Paramitas and the development of Bodhicitta, and the practice of Samadhi and penetrative insight on the basis of Bodhicitta; and the Tantric path.

This depends upon

2. the path of the beings of medium intelligence. This includes the preparatory achievement of renunciation and the full understanding of samsaric suffering derived from meditating on the twelve dependent links.

This depends upon

3. the path of the beings of lower intelligence. This includes the preparatory achievement of understanding the perfect human rebirth, impermanence and death, the suffering of the three lower realms, Refuge and karma.

MEDITATION ONE: PART 1: THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH

From time without beginning until the present, in all my numberless previous lives, I have been dying and being reborn in the cycle of samsara, the six realms of suffering. Now I have received a perfect human rebirth which has eighteen attributes: the eight freedoms and the ten receptacles.

WHAT IS THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH?

The eight freedoms (Tib., D'äl.wa.gyä)

These are conditions of existence out of the eight unfree states in which beings do not have the chance to practise Dharma.

Freedom from birth

1. in the hells (Tib., *nyal.wa*; Skt., narak),
2. as a hungry spirit (Tib., *yi.d'ag*; Skt., preta),
3. as an animal (Tib., *d'ü.dro*),
4. as a long-life god (Tib., *lha.tse.ring.po*).

Although born human, freedom from being

5. a barbarian (Tib., *la.lor*) in an irreligious country,
6. deaf (Tib., *wön.ba*),
7. a heretic (Tib., *log.ta.chän*), or
8. born during a time with no orders of Buddha, when Buddha has not descended (Tib., *yül.t'a.k'ob*).

If I am born in the three lower realms—narak, preta and animal—I have no freedom to practise Dharma because of the unimaginable suffering and deep ignorance that I continuously experience.

In the realm of the long-life gods I have no freedom to practise Dharma because I am constantly distracted by objects of the senses and higher samsaric pleasures, or because of rebirth as a cognitionless god, unconscious from birth until death.

If a barbarian, I have no opportunity to meet the Dharma. If deaf, I cannot communicate with others properly, cannot hear the Teachings and cannot be ordained. If a heretic, I have no belief in the Dharma—the existence of past and future lives, of karma, of Absolute and relative truth—and no faith in the three Jewels: these wrong views give no freedom to practise Dharma.

If born in a period without the Buddha or his Teachings there is no freedom to practise Dharma because I cannot find it.

The ten receptacles (Endowments), (Tib., jor.pa.chu):

These are the chances I have received that give me the opportunity to practise the Dharma perfectly.

1. Birth as a human being.
2. Birth in the centre of a religious country.
3. Birth with perfect organs.
4. Avoidance of creating or having others create the five extreme negative actions: killing my mother, killing my father, killing an Arhant, wounding a Tathagata or causing disunity amongst the Sangha.
5. Belief in the practice of Dharma, the three divisions of the Teachings: The Vinaya, Sutra and Abhidharma.
6. Birth during a non-dark period.
7. Being shown the Teachings of the Buddha or his followers.
8. The existence of experienced Teachings—the still living realisations of the Buddha himself.
9. Following the path of the Buddha's Teachings.
10. Receiving the kindness and compassion of others, i.e., help for my Dharma practice: with temporal needs such as food or robes from a benefactor, and with Teachings from a compassionate Guru.

HOW IS THIS PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH USEFUL?

This perfect human rebirth is extremely useful because it gives me the chance to achieve both ultimate and temporal goals, and allows me to create much merit, in a very short time. Thus:

1. This is the perfect chance definitely to end the continuous, beginningless suffering of bondage to the wheel of life, and to achieve Enlightenment. The perfect human rebirth makes Enlightenment possible by completing the collection of merits:

   a. in three countless great aeons,
   b. in eight great aeons,
   c. in this lifetime, by increasing its length through the co-operative

practice of Sutra and Tantra,[6]

d. in this lifetime, even if short, through the practice of Tantra,

e. in twelve or even three years.

2. I can become a great Bodhisattva, having achieved infinite Knowledge.
3. I can become an Arhant, a supreme Being who has attained the complete cessation of suffering.
4. I can receive the Bodhicitta, the will to become Buddha for the sake of others.
5. I can achieve other realisations, such as true compassion, or fully renounced mind.
6. I could become the king of many universes through realisations.
7. As distinct from the above Dharma benefits, even worldly benefits can result, such as becoming the richest man in the world through having created good karma by being generous and giving lavishly to others.

This perfect human rebirth also gives many other possibilities, according to my interest. I could become a minister, scholar, doctor, judge, commercial artist, ski-instructor, barman, hotel porter, secretary, etc. We could lead a free and happy life without one single possession, which is impossible for those people who believe that all pleasure is derived solely from material conditions and external phenomena. Actually, some of those deeply ignorant and confused beings really believe what they did in dreams or under the effect of drugs to be real.

Wasting this very **precious human rebirth** is many millions of times worse than losing universes full of precious jewels because:

1. It wastes the numberless lives spent trying to gain this precious rebirth, which has resulted from good karma, created by morality and charity. These virtues have been practised mainly in the human realms during several previous lives, each of which was the result of many others.
2. It wastes the present opportunity of gaining Enlightenment and achieving all other realisations.
3. It wastes the possibility of better future lives, in which I could have achieved realisations and attained Enlightenment, stopping all suffering.

Numberless jewels, as many as could fill numberless universes, could never have the value of this present perfect rebirth. If all the jewels I have possessed in all

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[6] The Sutra Teachings demand a gradual practice without initiation, involving ten grounds, following the Bodhisattva's Path of Perfection. The Tantric Teachings are a short-cut, enabling one to reach Enlightenment without passing through the ten Sutra Grounds, but still requiring true understanding and pure practice of the basic Sutra Teachings.

my past lives could fill an infinite space, what good would that do? If I really think deeply about it I can see that no real happiness would come from that because it is of no use in controlling this negative mind.

We must check up on our own past experiences or put ourselves in the position of a wealthy man to see how material possessions cannot help us put an end to suffering. It is important to deeply see and feel our own experience of such situations.

There are spirits called nagas, inhabiting the animal realm, who are very rich and possess many stores of jewels. (The naga spirits have bodies half-human and half-animal, or of other shapes; they can see humans but most humans cannot see them.) We ourselves have had the experience of possessing such stores of jewels numberless times; we have possessed enough jewels to fill an endless space, yet no suffering has been cured. In the narak there are similar experienced beings, in great suffering.

The eight worldly dharmas

1. Craving for pleasures of the six senses.
2. Craving to be free of the unpleasant.
3. Craving to hear sweet, ego-pleasing words or sounds.
4. Craving to not hear ugly, displeasing words or sounds.
5. Craving to acquire material things.
6. Craving to avoid losing or not obtaining material things.
7. Craving for personal praise and admiration.
8. Craving to avoid personal slander, blame and criticism.

If I use this precious human rebirth only to gain the eight worldly dharmas or higher samsaric pleasures with self-cherishing thought, I shall circle continuously in the six samsaric realms of unimaginable suffering, as I have circled since beginningless time in all my previous lives. The beginning of these lives is not even seen by the Buddha's Omniscient Mind let alone by the minds of ordinary beings, and if I continue to work for these things I shall continue to suffer in the circle of samsara.

Usually I am afraid of the slightest temporary physical sicknesses such as colds or headaches, of suffering from heat or cold, or of the pain of a too-full or empty stomach; I find these things really unbearable and try to stop them by all kinds of temporal means.

On the other hand, I am not at all afraid of the greater sufferings I have experienced in past lives—those of rebirth and death and the many other unspeakable sufferings of the six samsaric realms that are caused by greed, ignorance and hatred. Neither to think or worry about these sufferings, merely trying to stop those of the moment, only creates the cause for more future suffering. Such

actions are extremely foolish and nonsensical—like those of a crazy person. I can have human thoughts and actions, yet I behave as a dumb animal.

Shantideva said:

> *The perfect human rebirth, the most difficult to find and a greatly beneficial foundation is, however, received by opportunity. If, while having the wisdom to know practice and avoidance, one again leads oneself to the narak, one is purposely making oneself ignorant.*

If I care so much about any momentary sufferings and sicknesses why do I not care about the tremendous, continuous suffering of my future lives; why do I not worry about and try to eliminate the true cause of suffering?

Spending this perfect human rebirth desiring only the eight worldly dharmas and working for the enjoyment of samsaric pleasures is like trading universes full of jewels for ka-ka. But even this very dirty thing is much more useful than attachment—it can be used by both people and animals.

The more I desire and enjoy the eight worldly dharmas and higher samsaric pleasures, the more I create confusion and remain ignorant.

IS IT EASY TO RECEIVE THE PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH?

1. The cause of the perfect human rebirth

This perfect human rebirth is extremely difficult to acquire because the cause that brings this result—the practise of morality and charity—is extremely difficult to create.

It is almost impossible to practise these virtuous actions if I am not human, and even then it is not easy. Firstly, I should be born in the southern rather than the other human worlds because the humans here are more sensitive and therefore see suffering more easily (see pp. 23-25). They also have the advantage of being able to practise Tantra, being endowed with the six physical prerequisites for such practice: three of these come from the father—bone, marrow and sperm; and three from the mother—skin, flesh and blood.

There are many other factors involved in the creation of morality and charity. For instance, if I am a heretic and believe that there is no such thing as the law of karma, I make no effort to collect merits. If I am physically handicapped by, for example, a missing limb or am deaf-mute, or am mentally retarded, I am unable to practise these two virtuous actions perfectly.

To effectively bring the result of the perfect human rebirth I should understand that it is causative and what the cause of it is: I must understand karma and its results. Many people talk about this but, not recognising the true nature of the mind, have gross misconceptions about the practice of morality and charity. Even

those who have correct knowledge of karma find these practices difficult to follow properly.

So I must know how to practise them correctly. Many people think that sacrificing other sentient beings to the gods is the right way to relieve their own suffering and find self-happiness by being reborn in heaven. In fact, the result of such actions is rebirth in the lowest narak stages in as short a time as possible.

It is essential that both morality and charity are created. Since rebirth in the upper realms mainly depends on moral conduct, practising charity alone cannot bring me this result.

The highly-controlled Guru Shakyamuni said:

> *The being who has a missing leg cannot follow the road. Similarly, one cannot attain Liberation without practising morality.*

Chandrakirti said:

> *One who breaks the leg of the precepts and is reborn as an animal never receives enjoyments once the result of charity has finished.*

Likewise, it is insufficient to practise morality alone. The resultant poverty and difficulty in satisfying temporal needs can hinder my Dharma practice greatly. If I lack material enjoyments now it is because of my previously imperfect practice of charity. Although rich and famous, if I am very avaricious and unable to create charity, I cannot receive a perfect human rebirth despite keeping pure morality. Also, a lower being can enjoy the results of charity but never practises charity because he is too ignorant.

2. The rarity of the perfect human rebirth

I can understand how the perfect human rebirth is difficult to receive by considering the way the sentient beings are distributed throughout the six samsaric realms.

The vast majority of sentient beings are in the narak. Thus the number of upper rebirths is smaller than the number of lower rebirths, and the number of perfect human rebirths is the smallest of all.

3. Analogies illustrating the difficulty of receiving the perfect human rebirth

The chance of gaining the precious perfect human rebirth is that of a blind tortoise, swimming in a vast ocean and surfacing only once each one hundred years, putting its head through a small golden ring floating somewhere on the surface.

It is more difficult than throwing grain so that it sticks to a glass wall or lands on the point of a needle.

HOW SHOULD WE MAKE OUR PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH HIGHLY MEANINGFUL?

We should use this rebirth to free ourselves from samsara by receiving Enlightenment or by becoming a noble Bodhisattva or Arhant. At least we should be fully confident of avoiding a lower rebirth.

However, these results cannot be achieved without surmounting much hardship of body and mind. To obtain all the realisations we must purify all negativity: this is not easy, yet it is extremely worthwhile.

Most of us spend our whole life in the pursuit of temporal comfort, working hard at great cost. Consider presidents, soldiers and mercenaries, those on expeditions and scientific missions, for example, astronauts, many poor-living people and so on. They all spend and risk their lives for nothing. All their actions result in great and continual suffering in future lives. Their whole life is empty and finishes so.

Especially if we check how much suffering and its cause we have experienced since beginningless time, we can see that we are capable of giving up attachment to the momentary comforts of the temporal life, and that it is necessary and of great value for the achievement of the very precious Dharma practice, which ceases all problems.

MEDITATION ONE: PART II: IMPERMANENCE AND DEATH

HOW LONG IS THE LIFE SPAN?

Life is so fragile, its nature is transitory. It is easy to see how it changes in only one year, a month, a week, a day, an hour, a minute, and second by second. There are sixty-five of the shortest instants in the time it takes to snap my fingers, and even in those short split seconds life is changing.

“Why should I be surprised that life changes so much? That’s natural; let it happen!” To think in this way is very foolish and ignorant because as life is changing so quickly in those very short instants I am becoming older.

Some may say, “That’s natural, I become older; let it happen!” This is another wrong attitude, not caring about becoming old. Still others, for example many New York people, want to deny the impermanent nature of their lives; they do not want to see the true nature of it at all. They try to disguise their appearance in the eyes of others who also play the same game. This is an absolutely vain attempt and such actions are not of the potential knowledge level of the human mind, and their creation is certainly not the purpose of the human rebirth from the Dharma point of view. No artificial effort can change eighty years into sixteen years. Age can never decrease in the view of the truly Enlightened Mind, which fully realises the samsaric body’s suffering because of its impermanent nature.

These people's minds have a double illusion: belief in artificial creation (scientific discoveries used to preserve matter and life from ruin and decay) and the wrong conception that a permanent subject-object exists. The first wrong belief causes problems to arise continually. The second wrong idea causes one to become more ignorant, lazy and careless.

There are two levels of impermanence:

1. Gross—changes of matter happening in long periods of time.
2. Subtle—inner changes of mind and invisible changes of matter happening in the shortest part of a second.

Our mind can't perceive subtle changes of matter; it can see only the gross changes from day to day, hour to hour, such as ruin, death, etc.

> *This vessel-like world which existed at an earlier moment does not do so at a later one. That it seems to continue in the same way is because something else similar arises, like the stream of a waterfall.*

I should worry about the changes of becoming old. Why should I worry? Because as years, months, days, split seconds are passing and I get older, the perfect chance of attaining Enlightenment given by my human rebirth is becoming exhausted and I'm getting closer to death. I have the right equipment, a pilot, a spaceship and enough fuel to make a trip around the universe and visit all the planets. But here I sit, engine running, burning up the fuel while my mind is distracted by other things. The longer my mind remains distracted the more I miss the chance of seeing the planets; as the fuel burns, time gets shorter. However, even this analogy does not adequately show the tragedy of wasting this precious human rebirth.

Even if the duration of my life were 100,000 years death would approach like this. With each second passed, the minutes shorten; with each minute, the hours; with each hour, the days; with each day, the months; with each month, the years. Each passing year shortens the life and the time of death draws nigh. Although well taken care of, a life of even this great length must end, so why not mine? By comparison my life is extremely short, perhaps lasting forty to fifty, certainly not more than eighty to one hundred, years. With each second, minute, hour, day, month, year, it shortens, nearing death. This human life is really short; this body of mine has not much longer to live.

IS DEATH DEFINITE?

My death is inevitable because no being has ever existed in the realms of samsara without continuously suffering death and rebirth.

IS THE TIME OF MY DEATH DEFINITE?

Death has many causes and so its time is uncertain.

1. When, according to past karma, life's end is due,
2. when factors sustaining life are unavailable, e.g., death by starvation, or
3. through ignorance, e.g., suicide, or carelessness.

At this moment, if I really check up within myself, I can find neither evidence nor guarantee that my life will continue for any definite period.

WHY SHOULD I BE AFRAID OF DEATH?

Kar.ma.pa d'ü.sum ky'en.pa (Karmapa: "realising past, present and future") said:

> *Why should I be afraid of death? Because when the Lord of Death comes it is difficult for the mind to be happy.*

I am greatly ignorant in being unafraid of death. This lack of fear results from not understanding the suffering of the death process itself or the suffering of my future lives. After death my ignorant mind will continuously suffer in the cycle of the twelve dependent links. In one month, one day, even in an hour, I create more negative than virtuous karma and have been doing so since beginningless time, in all my previous lives. Unless I break my chain of bondage to the cycle of the twelve dependent links, I shall eventually be reborn in one of the three lower realms.

For these reasons I should start practising Dharma as soon as possible, without being lazy.

Guru Shakyamuni said:

> *It is unsure whether tomorrow or the next life will come first.*

Therefore it is more worthwhile and wise to be prepared for the future life than for tomorrow, since tomorrow is very indefinite. This is very logical.

Shantideva, in *Bodhicaryavatara*, said:

> *It is not right to enjoy samsaric pleasures thinking, "I am not going to die today," putting off the practice of Dharma and not confessing negative karmas.*

DO PEOPLE OR MATERIAL POSSESSIONS HELP TO EASE OR PREVENT DEATH?

At the hour of death even universes containing numberless jewels which could bring all wishes cannot prevent death from occurring. Neither people—

relatives, friends, or others—nor any amount of personal strength or fame can prevent death. Instead of helping, these things only contribute to greater suffering.

HOW DO MY ATTACHMENTS CAUSE GREAT SUFFERING AT DEATH?

At the time of death I realise that I am separating from all my possessions and from my loved ones, and tremendously strong attachment and fear arise. My worry is far greater than usual worry, such as that arising from the separation of a couple or from parents. My physical body now creates much suffering and, although I have cared more for it than for any other being's body, it now becomes my enemy.

At the hour of death, the king and the beggar are exactly equal in that no amount of relatives or possessions can affect or prevent death. But who is the richer at the time of death? If the beggar has created more merits, then although he looks materially poor he is really the rich man. From the Dharma point of view, the mind that has prepared itself for the journey into the next life has the real riches.

If material possessions and relatives and friends are so meaningless and ineffectual at the time of death and cause suffering, becoming enemies, why do I attach so much importance to them and spend so much time caring for them?

For countless lives I have been attached to my physical body, providing it with all life's comforts, yet still this care has not ended, and my body continues to cause me problems. Has this care really any end? Wouldn't it be better to spend my life working for something which can be finished?

Padma Sambhava said:

> *The vision of this life is like last night's dream. All meaningless actions are like ripples on a lake.*

By caring only for my physical body I am like the person who will die tomorrow anyway, but goes to the hospital today for much expensive treatment. Any temporal happiness is meaningless and only results in suffering, never helping to end the cycle of death and rebirth. At the time of death numberless relatives, every possession—even numberless universes full of numberless jewels—and my body, which I have cared for more than any other, must all be left. All are of as little use as a single hair, for at death neither can be taken with the mind: in effect, there is no difference between all the world's possessions and one tiny hair.

As I am not sure to exist even from second to second, why should I be attached to my body or any possession, even at this moment?

THE ENLIGHTENED ONE'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE ORIGINAL HUMAN BEINGS

The original human beings appeared in this world through an intuitive rebirth (i.e., without using the bodies of parents). They had bodies of light, the same as Buddha's Holy Body, and they had a very long life, millions of years in duration.

They did not depend on material food because their food was happiness (the result of good karma), and they had many karmic psychic powers.

But in spite of all this their minds were not free of the seeds of ignorance, greed and hatred. The negative mind was latent and slowly, slowly, the negative impressions ripened and began to grow, and consequently their good fortune began to decrease—the result of their good karma was diminishing.

Therefore, at that time ordinary material, impure plants began to grow. Their greedy minds made them eat this impure food, causing their bodies to become more and more gross. The impure food inside their bodies became ka-ka through the development of a digestive process, and sex organs were created to eliminate the ka-ka.

Because of greed imprints coming from previous karma and because the sex organs were there (the co-operative cause), they began to have sexual intercourse. Consequently, other beings, who had created the karma to be reborn on this earth at that time, began to be reborn in their wombs.

This evolution of the earth and beings is created mentally, through previous karma, by beginningless mind. The formation of the earth and the birth of beings on it is not a unique occasion—it is a repetitive event without beginning.

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF DEATH AS SHOWN BY A FULLY UNDERSTANDING MIND

At the time of death, the elements are absorbed one after the other and the many changes appear gradually as feelings and visions. The final death comes when the subtle mind splits from the body, and this also is accompanied by physical signs.

At death, the person who has created much non-meritorious karma suffers from seeing evil omens that are the result of his past evil action. A very frightening physical situation occurs because of fearsome visions coming at that time. Dying with an indifferent mind, neither meritorious nor non-meritorious, one experiences neither pleasure nor suffering.

When the creator of evil dies the heat leaves the body starting from the head. When the creator of merit dies the heat first leaves from the feet. In each case the final loss of heat is from the heart.

At the time of death the mind is separating from the body, and the evil creator has the vision of going from light into dark.

Here follows an explanation of the process of a natural death, i.e., a death which is not sudden or traumatic:

1.

a. **The skandha of form is absorbed.**

External sign: the physical body becomes thinner and loses power.

b. The great mirror Wisdom is absorbed. This Wisdom clearly sees many objects at the same time, as a mirror reflects many objects together.

c. The earth element is absorbed.

External sign: the physical body becomes very thin, the hands and legs are very loose, and we feel very uncontrolled and as if being buried under a great weight of earth.

d. The eye organ[7] is absorbed.

External sign: it is impossible to control or move the eyes.

e. The inner subtle form is absorbed.

i. External sign: the colour of the physical body fades and the body loses its strength completely.

ii. The inner sign is a trembling silver-blue mirage, like water in the heat.

2.

a. The skandha of feeling is absorbed.

External sign: the physical body doesn't experience pain, pleasure or indifference.

b. The Wisdom of equality is absorbed. This Wisdom sees all feelings of happiness, suffering and indifference together, as having the same nature.

External sign: we no longer remember these feelings, i.e., the feelings perceived with the sense of mind as distinct from those perceived by the physical body.

c. The water element is absorbed.

External sign: all liquids of the body—urine, blood, saliva, sperm, sweat, etc.—dry up.

d. The ear organ is absorbed.

External sign: hearing ceases.

e. The inner sound is absorbed.

i. External sign: the buzzing in the ears ceases.

ii. The inner sign is a vision of smoke.

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[7] Here, "organ" (*Wang.po*) means more than just the eye itself. It is the vehicle of the sense *(She.pa)* and is the pure physical power. As it depends on the presence of an object it works only in the present; cf. the sense-base *(Wang.she)* which is connected to consciousness and has memory, etc.

3.

- **a. The skandha of cognition (perception) is absorbed.**

  External sign: there is no longer any recognition of our relatives and friends.

- **b. The Wisdom of discriminating awareness is absorbed.**

  This is the Wisdom which discriminates and remembers who our relatives and friends are.

  External sign: not remembering their names.

- **c. The fire element is absorbed.**

  External sign: the heat of the physical body disappears, and the capacity to digest food ceases.

- **d. The nose organ is absorbed.**

  External sign: breathing-in becomes difficult and weaker, and breathing-out becomes stronger and longer.

- **e. The inner sense of smell is absorbed.**

  i. External sign: the nose no longer detects smells.

  ii. The inner sign is a vision of sparks of fire, trembling like starlight.

4.

- **a. The skandha of volitional formations (compounded phenomena) is absorbed.**

  External sign: the physical body can no longer move.

- **b. The all-accomplishing Wisdom is absorbed.** This is the Wisdom of attainment, remembering outer work and success and their necessity.

  External sign: losing the idea of the necessity and purpose of outer work.

- **c. The air element is absorbed.**

  External sign: breathing ceases.

- d.

  i. The taste organ is absorbed.

  External sign: the tongue contracts and thickens and its root turns blue.

  ii. The tactile organ is absorbed.

  External sign: neither soft nor rough sensations can be perceived.

- **e. The inner taste sense is absorbed.**

  i. External sign: we can no longer detect the six different tastes.

  ii. The inner sign is a vision of a dim red-blue light, like the last flickering of a candle.

5.

Finally, the skandha of consciousness is absorbed.

This is the eighty gross superstitions and their foundations, motion (Skt., prana; Tib., *lung*). "Superstitions" means the gross illusive mind, the dualistic, wrong-conception mind. At this point we have the following visions:

a. White vision

A vision of a very clear sky, like that in autumn, full of the brightness of the moon.

It is caused by the prana going up through the left and right nadis, opening up the head chakra, and coming down through the central nadi.

It occurs when, as the central nadi opens, the white sperm or seed, received from the father, comes down to the heart chakra, visualised in the form of the letter (*Hung* reversed).

This is called "vision and emptiness."

b. Red vision

A vision of a copper-red reflection in the sky.

It is caused by the prana going up the central nadi to the heart, opening up the navel and fifth chakras.

It occurs when the red blood—the nature of which is fire-heat received from the mother, comes up to the heart chakra, visualised in the form of the letter (*Ah* reversed).

c. Dark vision

A vision of empty darkness, like a dark and empty space.

At this point the sperm and the blood are absorbed into a tiny seed: the bottom half is red, the top, white.

It occurs when these two come to the heart.

After this vision we fall unconscious—into complete darkness. Then the subtle mind arises and momentarily all gross superstitions absorb. Then appears the

d. Clear light vision

A vision of complete emptiness, very clear, like the sky of an autumn dawn. This is the clear light, the vision of the final death.

At this time, the time of the actual death, the gross mind, that which is holding the gross objects, ceases, but only momentarily. Due to karma, the seed of it is always there.

The subtle mind having this vision is enclosed within the seed formed by the united white and red hemispheres. The seed then opens and the subtle mind goes out, leaving the body to take the intermediate form.

Then, the white sperm goes down and comes out of the sex organ, while the blood leaves from the nostril.

This is the final sign—the consciousness, or spirit, *(Nam.she)*, has left the body. Now the mind has completely separated from the body. It is possible that ordinary people stay in this stage for some time, but don't then recognise it. Highly realised yogis can stay in this stage, meditating in the void for months, and are able to recognise all the visions of the death evolution.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE (BARDO BODY)

Until the cognition becomes unclear and powerless, the mind retains its habitual attachment to the "I." Because of this attachment, as the cognition weakens the wrong conception arises that "I" am becoming non-existent, causing fear of losing the "I." These thoughts create attachment to and craving for the body, which in turn leads to birth in the intermediate state.

After the clear light vision, before actually entering the Bardo, we experience the other three visions and the formation of the skandhas in the reverse order.

The evolution from death to the intermediate state is like passing from sleep to a dream. The eighty gross superstitions of the mind arise and the being takes the intermediate body. (During this time we can see the world, relatives and past dead body, but karmically do not remember any of it, so there is no desire to get back into it.)

The Bardo body is formed by previous karma and delusion. The principal cause of the intermediate state mind is the subtle mind and its co-operative cause is the prana, which comes with the subtle mind. The principal cause of the intermediate state body is the prana, and its co-operative cause is the subtle mind.

The form of the Bardo body is that of the next rebirth. Karmically it has no resistance to matter, is indestructible, and the being has many psychic powers, such as the ability to fly or do anything else it thinks of.

The length of existence in the Bardo body is seven days, after which time that intermediate being dies, taking rebirth in the same realm for a further seven days until death occurs or a physical body is found. The longest Bardo existence is forty-nine days.

To be born in the formless world, we do not pass through the Bardo.

The consciousness leaves the physical body according to the being's karmically-determined realm of rebirth:

Hell: from the anus.
Preta: from the mouth.
Animal: from the sex organ.
Human: from the eyes.

Gods of the senses: from the navel.
Evil spirits and demons: from the nose.
Spirits enjoying one particular sense: from the ears.
World of form: from the forehead chakra.
Formless world: from the highest head chakra.
Pure land: from the highest head chakra.

So many hospitals and chemical methods are provided to prevent death, yet patients and doctors still die without control. But, since the scientific idea is of lifelessness after death, is it not better to choose death, rather than this complicated life with its many difficulties, much work in trying to solve life's problems and its worries about death—a life without satisfaction or answers to these problems? According to this view, these problems do not exist after death, and such beliefs render the development of external methods meaningless.

Ideas limited by technical knowledge limit the power of the mind to understanding the factual, true nature of the mind's evolution. If scientific minds are really scientific—fully understanding and completely believable—then why are scientists unable to explain clearly and logically the reasons for the Earth's evolution? Why should there be living things on the Earth? What caused the degeneration of the mind?

With their great knowledge of physics, medicine and psychology, scientists look at all phenomena in terms of their outer material aspects rather than their inner nature. With this limited knowledge they can see no way for the development of inner perfect happiness without being materialistic or greedy. Greed replaced knowledge, and this limited knowledge is the quality or function of ignorance.

Are there any scientists or psychologists who can prove their "scientific" ideas about death? Can they see the evolution of the mind or fully see every existence? Research these questions—meditational practices are the best research: the best, quickest and most logical method of gaining full knowledge of science on every level.

Without the experience to prove their scientific understanding of death and life's beginnings, how can they prove that there are no future or past lives? This scientific knowledge is exactly like the small mind which sees only today, forgetting yesterday, and not perceiving tomorrow.

I can't criticise without having knowledge of science, but anyway, this matter is true for the true mind and wrong for the wrong mind.

PRAYER TO BE SAID AFTER MEDITATION ONE

From the Profound Tantric Text, Guru Puja

With this prayer visualise:

Guru Shakyamuni, surrounded by Vajradhara, the Infinite Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Arhants. Dakas and Dakinis, many other Tantric Deities, the Protecting Deities, and all the Holy Gurus in the direct and indirect Lineage of the

Teachings, sending much light to me and to all sentient beings, who are visualised as surrounding me.

This light is absorbed into me and into all sentient beings, purifying all negativities and obscurations and bringing all Knowledge—especially the Knowledge that the perfect human rebirth is difficult to achieve and decays easily, and of how to be able to make my life perfectly meaningful, without wasting it in the distractions of meaningless, temporal work.

LÄN.CHING. TZAM.ZHING NYE.PÄ D'ÄL JOR
once only acquired freedom perfect receptacle rebirth
DI NYE.KA NYUR.D'U JIG.PÄ TSÜL.TOG.NÄ
This acquire difficult soon decay nature realise and
D'ÖN.ME TSE.DI J'A.WA MI.YENG.WAR
meaningless life this work by not distracted
D'ÖN.DÄN NYING.PO LEN.PAR J'IN.GY'I.LOB
Having meaning essential to take please bless

(Please bless me and all sentient beings to realise that this perfect rebirth, found only once, is difficult to acquire and quickly dies, and to be able to make the life essentially meaningful, without being distracted by meaningless work.)

After this prayer, complete the visualisation as described on pp. 16-18 and dedicate the merits with the prayer on the last page.

MEDITATION TWO

The main reason for our having to meditate on impermanence and death and the infinite other sufferings of the six samsaric realm is, that to reach Nirvana—everlasting peace and happiness—we have to surmount many obstacles and bear the hardships of Dharma practice, the method that brings this result. In meditation, we visualise and try to feel all these different sufferings. This gives us the energy and strength we need to destroy laziness and control samsaric problems, the greatest hindrances to Dharma practice, and as we practise we gradually eradicate all illusive minds and receive the realisations leading to those of the true nature of mind and supreme Enlightenment.

Each of the infinite past, present and future Buddhas attained Enlightenment and preceding realisations through the deep experience of these meditations on suffering, and the graded realisations of Bodhisattvas and Arhants are also derived from such practice.

Meditation on the suffering of the six samsaric realms is necessary:

1. at the beginning of our practice, whereby our experiences make us enter the path of renunciation;
2. in the middle, so that we are pushed or carried forward to the various higher levels of the path, overcoming any difficulties encountered with harder practices; and
3. at the end, when our experiences bring Enlightenment, making us work as Buddha during every second, to lead each and every sentient being into Enlightenment.

The Buddha sees every relative existence and its Absolute nature. With great compassion and without error, he revealed many examples of suffering so that we might receive renunciation. The fully renounced mind is the sword that slays all samsaric problems and helps to cut us free from attachment, from greed, ignorance and hatred, and from delusions. There is no way to receive perfect happiness without this mind.

The renounced mind generates the mental energy required to control our physical and verbal actions, but does not arise suddenly, like temporary clouds. It comes from the clear, deep recognition that the nature of samsara is great suffering, and we can only develop this through meditation, placing ourselves in this intense suffering. Hence, we come to realise our own suffering, especially that which we have experienced in the three lower realms, and, thereby, can dispel such negative minds as greed, ignorance, hatred, pride, jealousy, etc. By feeling and fearing the suffering of these realms, we come to understand how suffering is caused by bad karma and happiness by good karma. These realisations compel us to strive for rebirth in the three upper realms.

To create good karma and collect merits, it is very important that we have the fear that arises from the understanding of the true evolution of karma. We don't

touch fire because we understand its nature and are afraid of being burnt. Similarly, by understanding the nature of bad karma and its suffering consequences, we should be afraid to create it. Only then shall we be conscious of the need to create good karma.

MEDITATION TWO: PART 1: THE THREE LOWER REALMS OF SUFFERING

THE HELLS

The hell realm (narak) is the greatest experience of suffering. It is karmically created by the deluded mind and exists because of our karmic debt. There are also karmically-created hell-protectors with heads like animals, who prevent us from escaping until our karmic debt is paid.

The principal cause of the narak is craving.

There are eight hot naraks and eight cold, as well as occasional and neighbouring naraks, i.e., eighteen altogether. The following examples are almost nothing compared to the worst sufferings, which are beyond expression. These light examples were shown by the Enlightened Being as he perceived them.

1. The hot narak (*Tsa.nyäl*)

During this lifetime, whenever I am cold and crave for heat and grasp at its enjoyment, I am planting a seed and accumulating impressions on the consciousness for craving for heat at the time of death.

At the hour of death, when I feel cold, my great attachment to warmth causes me to crave for heat and I die with great attachment to the physical body.

After this I experience the intermediate state.

As if waking from a dream, I should visualise my rebirth in the hot sufferings, as infinite as space.

a. **The reviving narak**. In this the stage of least suffering, I am reborn amongst many other beings, who brandish weapons, trying to kill each other. Also, many karmically-created, sword-like weapons rain down slashing and piercing my whole body causing excruciating pain. As soon as I tremble and die, a karmically created voice is heard saying, “Again will you be killed.” I am spontaneously reborn onto the red-hot iron ground, only to be killed once more, being reborn and killed many hundreds of times each day.

   This continues until my karmically-deserved suffering is worked off. Rebirth in this narak results from being spiteful and acting out of hatred.

b. **The black line narak**. As carpenters mark wood with red-hot wires, so the narak protectors make black lines on my body, which lies on red-hot ground, and then proceed to carve me into pieces with red-hot saws or chop me up with hot, sharp axes.

c. **The crushing narak**. The narak-protectors put me and many other beings into crevices between two huge iron mountains, the shape of which resembles the heads of people and animals I have killed. Coming together these mountains squash me, and I fall onto red-hot ground with unbearable pain. The mountains separate, and my life is restored so that I can be killed like this, again and again, until this karma is expended.

   Other tortures in this narak include being rolled flat by red-hot rollers, being smashed to pieces as villagers smash rice and being ground in a mill. Each drop of blood and each piece of my body is conscious, and as they fall onto the red-hot ground I experience excruciating agony.

   Rebirth in this narak results from committing the three immoralities of the physical body—killing, stealing and sexual misconduct—with greed.

d. **The howling narak**. I am trapped inside a burning house full of other beings. Because of karmic obscuration the house collapses and we all perish. This results from the strong desire to kill and cheat.

   Finally, I escape from this house, only to find myself trapped inside another, from which there is no escape. This is caused by holding wrong views and having strong cravings.

e. **The loud howling narak**. Born in a pot of boiling liquid, the size of a large country, I am cooked like a fish, sinking and rising repeatedly with extreme suffering. Narak-protectors perforate my flesh with red-hot spears, which causes incredible pain, and flames issue from these holes. Then they place me onto red-hot ground where I am beaten, and carved into pieces. This is the result of harming others.

f. **The heating narak**. I am forced to ingest blazing coals and molten metal, suffering greatly from burnt intestines. This results from criticising Holy Beings and telling lies.

   For corrupting Dharma, I am reborn in an immense frying pan and roasted like pop-corn. My tongue is seized, stretched flat to the size of a large city, staked out and ploughed up by an iron plough.

g. **The intense heating narak**. Red-hot tridents enter my body through the soles of the feet and the anus, the points coming out of my shoulders and head. This is caused by harming others such as celibates living in the precepts and parents.

h. **The Avici narak**. This is the worst suffering stage. My body is one with fire, and can only be recognised as a living being because of the cries of pain. It is melted down by the intensely powerful flames which come from all directions causing unremitting suffering.

   Rebirth in this narak is the result of killing religious people, denigrating the Dharma and breaking precepts.

   I suffer for a long time in these eight stages. Fifty human years are just one day for the samsaric gods of the senses (*Gyäl.ch'en*) and five hundred years for these gods is just one day for the denizens of the mildest narak, who live for five hundred years made up of such days.

   Five hundred years for these beings is just one day for those experiencing the next level, and so it goes on, in terms of time, down to the Avici narak. And as the duration of suffering increases, so does its intensity.

2. The neighbouring naraks

There are four of this situated at each side of the eight major naraks, so that there are sixteen surrounding each level.

a. Here I get stuck in very hot quicksand, sinking deeper as I struggle to escape, and karmically-created beings come to eat my head, which protrudes above the surface.

b. Drowning in a filthy quagmire, insects cause me great suffering by penetrating and consuming my body.

c. Escaping from this, I find myself on a ground of swords pointing upwards, where I cannot step without cutting my feet. There are also trees with sword-like leaves, and savage dogs and birds with iron beaks that attack me.

d. I am confined to a river by narak-protectors, who force boiling water and red-hot coals into my mouth.

3. The cold narak (*Dr'ang.nyäl*)

There are also eight main stages of cold sufferings where my agony is unimaginable and unlimited.

On the first two levels my whole body blisters from exposure to a freezing wind. The blisters burst and re-blister.

On the next three levels my pain increases progressively, and as I weep from suffering the intense cold, my teeth freeze together.

On the last three levels my body cracks more and more. At first it is blue with a few cracks. These spread and increase in size, and my body turns red. Finally, split

into more pieces, like a lotus, my body turns deep red and I experience the extreme cold suffering.

The whole realm is completely dark. I am trapped in narrow crevices or forced to dwell beneath ice-mountains, almost one with the ice. Insects feast on my wounds, devouring flesh and pus. Mind and body are full of suffering.

Yet these examples are mild compared to other experiences in this realm.

4. The occasional narak

These may exist on this earth in such places as deserts, and some people can perceive their existence.

THE REALM OF THE PRETAS

The principal cause of birth as a preta is miserliness.

Pretas may be found in many different places, but there are certain locations that most of them inhabit. Wherever they are such areas are desolate and fearful.

They are very ugly in appearance. Their stomachs are enormous—miles wide, like large mountains, but always empty. Their mouths are tiny, like the eye of a needle, and their necks extremely thin and knotted two or three times. Their legs and arms are also very thin; often they cannot support their body and are forced to roll everywhere. They are hairy, and their skin is very dry, stretched tight so that blood vessels stand out prominently. If their legs strike each other as they walk, sparks may be seen. Blood and pus issue from their body, and some eat their own flesh, peeling off their skin.

There are three main sorts of problem that pretas experience.

1. Hindrance of food

The pretas spend their whole life suffering hunger and thirst. No matter how hard or how long they seek, they cannot find food or water. On seeing a beautiful lake from afar the preta runs to it with great expectation, but on reaching it finds that it turns into a lake of blood, pus and ka-ka, full of animal hairs.

2. Outer hindrances

After searching for such a long time the preta may find clean food and water, but as he approaches, is attacked and chased away by very fearsome karmically-created protectors with heads like animals.

3. Inner hindrances

Even though the preta eventually finds clean water that is not guarded by a protector, there are problems with the body. Only a little goes through the tiny mouth, and that usually dries because of the poison in its mouth. Even if it doesn't dry, the neck is narrow and knotted, and it is difficult to swallow. Then, should any water reach the stomach, it bursts into flames, which come out of the preta's mouth, or it turns into sharp knives which cut its whole body. Even if that doesn't happen, the stomach is so large and the amount of food or water so small, that the preta can

never feel satisfied. Either all that or the preta cannot eat the food it finds because of miserliness.

For these suffering, ignorant beings all things change into the opposite. In his Teaching, *Lob.ding*, Nagarjuna explained that if a preta tries to go to the tip of a rock protruding above the surface of the ocean, it is flooded over by waves which turn the whole place into a horrible eruption of fire, a strong wind blowing is spreading the fire. The preta wishes that rain would fall, but it is like iron balls dropping from the clouds; huge golden-coloured rocks hail down and red light flashes through its body. To the preta the summer moonlight is hotter than fire and burns them with great flames. In winter ever the hottest sun is extremely cold.

One human month is a day for a preta. The longest life for a preta is 50,000 years.

Amongst the specific causes of rebirth as a preta are theft, sexual misconduct, covetousness, preventing others from making charity, and calling someone else a preta.

THE ANIMAL REALM

The cause of rebirth as an animal is ignorance and stupidity.

I can understand the great suffering of these beings by visualising myself in the form of different animals and trying to feel their experience. Apart from the specific problems peculiar to each one, there are four general sufferings common to most animals.

1. The suffering of being deeply ignorant and foolish.
2. The suffering of being exploited by others. Practically every animal is prey for another there and suffers from being killed for food and eaten. They are also killed for parts of their body such as fur, skin, bone, horns, etc. So easily controlled by others, they are compelled to perform gruelling work under intolerable conditions.
3. The suffering of hunger and thirst.
4. The suffering of heat and cold.

Domestic animals or wild, those who fly or those inhabiting the Earth's surface, those underground or those who live in the water—all experience these sorts of problem, and may remain in this realm for many eons.

Amongst the specific causes for rebirth as an animal are telling lies, gossip-mongering, heresy, breaking precepts, calling others, especially those in the Dharma, by animal nick-names, and sacrificing animals.

We should continue meditating on the suffering of the three lower realms until we receive the experience of this suffering. This experience generates effortless fear, a feeling arising from mere contemplation, and this energy stimulates us to maintain virtuous practice. Hence, we can reach Enlightenment sooner.

The following story gives us an idea of how we feel when we have received the realisation of this meditation.

Guru Shakyamuni's disciple, *Kün.ga.wo*, had two nephews who became monks. After studying for only two days, they became lazy, and although *Kün.ga.wo* told them to renounce samsara and laziness they did not do so. So they were given to another disciple, *Mong. gäl.gyi.wu*.

One day, he took the two boys to a place where he performed a miracle showing the narak—they saw many beings suffering by being chopped, split and cut to pieces by others, and saw two large pots of boiling water. They heard the narak-protectors asking, "Who is to be cooked in these?", and the answer, "*Kün.ga.wo's* nephews will be reborn in these pots if they lazily waste their time after becoming monks." This frightened them very much, and they suffered as if they would die right away. *Mong.gäl.gyi.wu* told them to apply their mental energy to the renunciation of laziness and its negative karmic results. So they became very energetic, and, if they recalled the narak suffering at meal-times, could not eat and would vomit.

On another occasion they were taken to a place where they heard violin music. Investigating this, they saw beautiful palaces full of goddesses and asked themselves, "Why are there no sons?" They heard the reply, "*Kün.ga.wo's* nephews will be reborn here as sons if they practise Dharma energetically." They were very pleased at this, and *Mong.gäl.gyi.wu* explained that they should be even more energetic, because this and many other good results would arise from energetic Dharma practice.

The boys asked the noble *Mong.gäl.gyi.wu* if they could be reborn in the lower realms after receiving an upper rebirth, and he replied, "Just as the rope that is used to draw water from a well has to pass around the pulley, so must you cycle in samsara until the cessation of delusion."

They received the renounced mind and requested Teachings to help prevent them from creating any more deluded actions. He gave much Teachings, and they attained Nirvana.

Whenever we think we are suffering, we should remember the suffering of the three lower realms. It is difficult to feel because the negative mind becomes like stone to prevent this experience. But, looking into our mind and checking the amount of suffering, we should think, "How am I suffering? Other beings suffer far more than this." Comparing our suffering with that of others gives understanding-experience. Recognition of our own suffering is a basic necessity for Dharma practice.

The experience of suffering is to tell us that we have created negative karma before, and that this is the result. This is the manifestation of our Holy Guru teaching us about suffering and karma.

Meditation on suffering has always been indispensable for the realisation of limitless, everlasting happiness, even in Guru Shakyamuni's time. Understanding these experiences gives us the powerful energy we need to escape from the bondage of

suffering quickly; it is the best medicine for our mental diseases. But the Dharma is not external; it is the safest, most priceless possession within—the work that has an end.

But many people—worldly, curious Westerners—pose as Dharma practitioners, and talk about higher, mystical realisations, expecting Enlightenment to come like a snowfall. They think that certain meditations, especially those on samsaric nature, and particularly that on the three lower realms, are ridiculous, funny or scary, and a complete waste of time. But by denying ourselves the experience of these meditations, we remain ignorant of the most important realisations of highly realised beings. Some of us "practise Dharma," but with mere words and superior thinking, afraid of living in serious practice, which opposes attachment to the world.



Figure 6—Dharmachakra

MEDITATION TWO: PART II: REFUGE *(Zyab.dro)* (Asking for Guidance)

Milarepa said:

> *Now be afraid of the eight restless stages, and remember impermanence and samsaric suffering. Rely completely on the saviours, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and be careful in the creation of karma.*

According to his words we should try to avoid a samsaric rebirth, but the method is not yet within our grasp. Who has the perfect method to release us from samsara? Not earth, water, fire or air; neither sun, moon nor animal. Only Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the perfect method to rescue us from samsara and the three lower realms of suffering. Therefore, they are perfect guides. Any being with perfect power can be a pure and perfect guide, whether he is called "Buddha" or not. Yet, even one who has the psychic power to fly through the air or to emit light cannot be worthy of our trust if he doesn't have the power of a Buddha. To see clearly how the Buddha is the perfect guide, we must practise his Teachings and experience for ourselves the results of his perfect method. How is Buddha a perfect guide and why is his method perfect? Because

1. he has released himself from all fears; those of
    a. *Nyön.drib:* the gross negative mind—delusions and obscurations—greed, ignorance and hatred. This prevents our attaining Nirvana. And
    b. *She.drib:* the illusive mind that sees the dualistic vision and has the defect of the impression of ignorance (delusion), which is the conception of self-existence. And
2. he has extensive skill in rescuing each and every sentient being from the fears of delusion and its impressions. He works impartially for all sentient beings, whether they believe in him or not, and is pleased by the offering of attainment (sincere practice) rather than by material offerings.

When children are afraid or in danger, they always ask the help of their parents, and so should we always rely on the Triple Gem, our everlasting parents. Everlasting, because they are our guide not only for this life but until we attain Enlightenment.

Buddha is the founder of Refuge.
Dharma is the real Refuge.
Sangha is the helper on the path.

It is not enough that the guides have the perfect method—I have to co-operate with them. There are **two** main **reasons for** my **taking Refuge**, and the stronger my feeling of these, the stronger will my Refuge be.

1. Great fear of samsaric suffering, especially that of the three lower realms, and
2. the firm belief that the three Jewels have the sublime power to guide cause me to take Refuge.

Since beginningless time I have been suffering through lack of pure, strong Refuge in Buddha. The precious Dharma that he achieved and showed is also a worthy object of real Refuge, and so too is the precious Sangha, the followers of the path shown, because they help me to practise the Dharma.

I must receive Enlightenment to have the All-Knowledge of the Buddha and the Dharma, and until such time I have not realised fully the Refuge. It is very important to understand how Dharma is the real Refuge.

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF BUDDHA (*Sang.gyä kyi yön.tän)*

A. The Totally Omniscient Buddha's Knowledge

1. Svabhavakaya (Ngo.wo nyid.ku)

The clear light nature of Buddha's Holy Mind.

The uttermost sphere of the two complete perfect purities, i.e., completely purified of both gross (*Nyön.drib*) and subtle (*She.drib*) obscurations.

2. Dharmakaya (Ye.she.ch'ö.ku)

The Omniscient Mind of the Buddha, fully seeing each and every Absolute and relative existence.

3. Sambhogakaya (*Long.ku*)

The most qualified Holy Body of form, which has five definite attributes:

a. giving only Mahayana Teachings,
b. existing until samsara ends,
c. being surrounded only by Bodhisattvas,
d. abiding in the definite realm of *Og.min*, and
e. being adorned with thirty-two perfect qualities *(Tsän.zang)* and eighty minor perfections *(Pe.j'ä),* the most sublime of Buddha's qualities

4. Nirmanakaya (*Trul.ku*)

The transformation of Buddha's Holy Body into infinite aspects, according to the different sentient beings' level of mind.

It is the form in which the Buddha appears to ordinary beings.

a. Guru Shakyamuni was seen as a bhiksu (monk) or Sangha, because the karma of the beings who saw him was such as to allow it.
b. Statues, *t'ang.k'a's*, etc., are all that can be seen in degenerate times such as the present. Guru Shakyamuni said that when people's negative minds were strongly developed, he would appear only in the form of letters.
c. Visualisations. Buddha's Holy Body can be perceived in this form by using the powers of the senses.

B. The Knowledge of the Perfected One's Holy Body, Speech and Mind

1. Buddha's Holy Body

His Body has every beauty, but does not have even one atom of matter nor the slightest resistance to matter. Buddha's whole Body, his hair and nails included, are his Mind. Even one single hair sees each and every existence.

He can transform his Body into countless different aspects according to the different levels of mind of countless beings. To some he appears in the form of animals, to others as a crazy foolish man, a king, a minister, or a beggar. He can appear in the form of letters, bridges where there are none, or as water for those who seek it. To guide fortunate beings who seek his assistance, at the right moment he can take the necessary form.

In every tiny ray of light of Buddha's Holy Body there are countless Buddhas—the seed of each of these different aspects of Buddha is within the mind of each sentient being.

Only supreme Bodhisattvas can see all the major and minor marks of the Sambhogakaya, such as thousand-spoked wheels on his hands and feet, webbed fingers, copper-coloured nails, the double protuberance on the top of his head, peaceful narrow eyes, a curl on his forehead, etc.

2. Buddha's Holy Speech

His Speech is extremely charming. Just to hear his voice brings great pleasure and peace to the mind, and release from greed, hatred, ignorance and suffering.

He only has to speak one word to be understood in any language and according to the hearer's level of mind, and one word can answer countless different questions at the same time.

3. Buddha's Holy Mind

His Mind has a twofold quality:

a. The supreme quality of understanding, which incorporates the totality of both Absolute and relative existence. He fully perceives past, present and future simultaneously.

   For example, if all the trees in the world were chopped into small pieces, mixed up and thrown into the ocean, he could recall the origin of each piece, so great is his discerning Mind.

b. The supreme quality of compassion, by which the Buddha is bound, just as sentient beings are bound by delusion. His great compassion is impartial, so he takes the utmost care of each and every sentient being.

For example, if he were to sit between two people, one cutting him with knives, the other caressing him gently, his compassion towards both would be equal.

Because Buddha's Holy Body, Speech and Mind are one, the minutest portion of his Holy Body is also part of his Holy Speech and Mind, and can appear in numberless forms.

The Holy deeds of Buddha's Holy Body, Speech and Mind are intuitive, completely effortless and unremitting. They help each sentient being differently. His actions benefit greatly those whose minds have been properly prepared, just as more seed can be planted in a field that has been widened.

If the total Knowledge of Buddha is kept in mind, my faith can be much strengthened. That faith causes the Bodhicitta to grow continually. Even the suffering of death is diminished by remembering Buddha's qualities.

The Sutra, *Do.ting nge.dzin.gy'i gyäl.po* says:

> *The body, speech and mind of the faithful often admire the Buddha's Knowledge. As this strong faith continues, the guide of the universe can be seen day and night. Even when that person is suffering from illness nearing death he never loses sight of Buddha, and that suffering can never overcome his faith.*

Therefore, if I have full faith in my heart through having frequently remembered Lord Buddha's Knowledge, the clear evidence of this Knowledge will give me faith in its products, the Dharma and the Sangha.

When I take Refuge in Buddha, I am not allowed to follow those who lead me along the wrong path.

II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF DHARMA *(Ch'ö.kyi yön.tän)*

The avoidance of any action that creates negative karma is Dharma, and all actions that create merit are Dharma actions.

Any methods free of negative mind are Dharma methods no matter how different they appear. But any method stained with greed for temporal life comfort, ignorance of the evolution of karma, or hatred is not a Dharma method, no matter how it looks.

The positivity or negativity of any action depends on its impulse and its effect, and not only on how it is performed. It is most important that I check up on the likely effect of any action I am about to perform. If it fights the negative minds of greed, ignorance and hatred, it is a Dharma action. If it only helps to gain temporal happiness, it is a negative action. Effect is something I can see in my mind before performing the action; it is a matter of having understanding and wisdom.

As there may be no difference in appearance between an action performed with deluded mind in a samsaric way and one performed with pure mind in a Dharma way, we cannot judge the actions of others from external appearances. It is what is in the mind, the creator, that is important.

Dharma contains every path leading to Enlightenment, the true cessation of suffering. It contains all Absolute and relative existence, and every result deriving from the path. To achieve perfect Knowledge of Dharma. I must realise each and every existence, I must become Buddha. Therefore, any being who does not have perfect knowledge of all existence cannot guide me to release from samsara.

Knowledge of the Dharma, the Teachings shown by Guru Shakyamuni, the Enlightened Being, causes me to receive perfect happiness—the happy result of following the happy path. This Knowledge breaks the continuity of samsara, cleans all delusion from the mind, and never betrays those willing to receive Nirvana. It always makes actions virtuous.

The Knowledge of Dharma is infinite. The best way to see it is by living in the gradual realisation. Some people hide their ignorance as they would a jewel, and blame the Teachings for their increasing negative mind. This shows that they are not practising the real, pure Dharma.

Through the serious observance of the prohibitive and permissive precepts shown by Buddha's Teachings, and by trying to fully understand the Dharma, I may

1. receive Enlightenment—the highest result,
2. become an Arhant—the intermediate result, or
3. achieve a better rebirth—the lowest result.

The real Dharma is the abandoning of all defects—the true cessation of suffering, and the path of fully realising Shunyata. Fully completing these realisations brings Enlightenment, the All Knowledge: this is the Knowledge of Dharma. Hence Buddha himself is also the Dharma jewel and the Sangha jewel.

When I take Refuge in Dharma, I cannot give harm to any sentient being.

III. THE KNOWLEDGE OF SANGHA *(Ge.dün gyi yön.tän)*

Whoever lives in the realisation of the path, the four Noble Truths, is Sangha. All noble beings having true Dharma Knowledge, the perception of the Absolute Truth of all existence, having removed all delusion are Sangha. So the Sangha has exalted power, as does the Dharma. When I take Refuge in Sangha, I cannot follow heretics.

INSTRUCTIONS IN THE PRACTICE OF REFUGE

1. A statue of the Buddha, made of any material, should not be stepped over, but kept in a high place and revered as if it were a real Buddha, remembering his Knowledge.
2. Any letters used to explain the Teaching should be respected as the real Dharma and not underestimated. Such books should not be placed on the floor or stepped over.

The realised Tibetan ascetic, *Sha.ra.wa* said:

> *Disrespecting Dharma and the person explaining Dharma causes one to lose Wisdom. There is no need to create more ignorance than already exists.*

3. Any monk or nun should be respected as the real Sangha. In *Lhag.sam.kul.wa* Guru Shakyamuni said:

> *One should not despise the lower Ge.long (full monk). If one shows contempt for any lower Ge.long, one will not reach Liberation for one aeon. The monk should be respected according to his degree of ordination.*

As much as I respect Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, so shall I be respected by other sentient beings.

In *Do.ting.nge.dzin.gy'i.gyal.po* Guru Shakyamuni said:

> *Whatever action we create, the result will return to us.*

THE BENEFITS OF TAKING REFUGE

If the good results of taking Refuge were to manifest themselves in form, there would not be enough room in the three worlds to contain them, so immense are the benefits. They are innumerable—more numerous than handfuls of water in all the oceans.

Yet, there are eight major benefits of taking Refuge.

1. Becoming Buddhist (an inner being; Tib., *Nang.pa)*
2. It is the basis of all ordinations.
3. All previous bad karma is diminished.
4. Extensive good karma accumulates.
5. I cannot be afflicted by either humans or non-humans.
6. I shall not be reborn in the three lower realms.
7. It brings all success.
8. I shall receive Enlightenment sooner.

Taking Refuge is, therefore, extremely important, and it is the basis of all Teachings:

To attain Enlightenment or to gain Tantric practices, I must complete the practice of the six Paramitas: the transcendental perfections of Charity, Morality, Patience, Effort, Concentration and Wisdom. To do so, I need the three higher trainings of Conduct, Concentration and Wisdom. The basis of these three is taking Refuge.

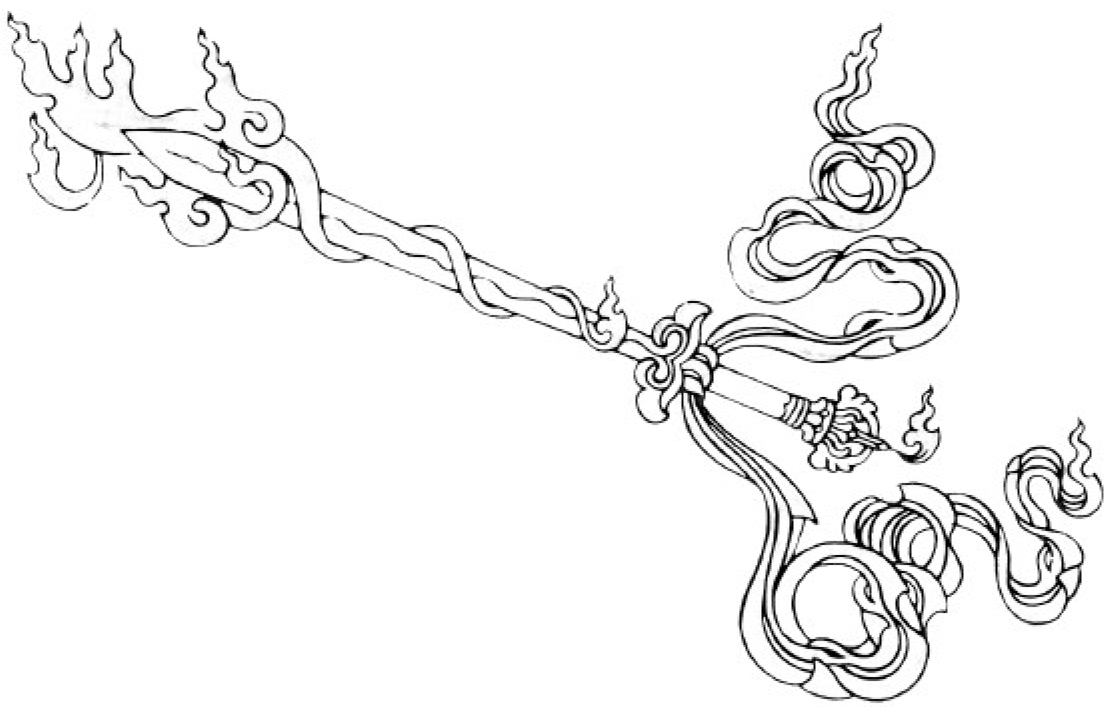


Figure 7—Sword of Manjusri

MEDITATION TWO: PART III: KARMA (*La*)

If I take Refuge, how does God guide me?

Guru Shakyamuni said:

> *I have shown you the path to the eradication of samsaric pains: the follower who has passed as I have shown is the guide. So should you do it yourself.*

As numberless followers of Guru Shakyamuni received Enlightenment through the actual Refuge, Dharma, if I too follow the path of Dharma, the actual Refuge jewel, exactly as was shown by Buddha, it will release me from every illusion. This is how Buddha guides me.

To achieve fully the most supreme peace, which is freedom from all sufferings and the removal of every single obscuration, it is necessary to actualise completely the whole path, the Dharma jewel. This starts by correcting each tiny action: avoidance and practice, which is called "observing karma." Therefore, understanding karma is not only the fundamental path to Enlightenment but is even the root of all other perfections and happiness.

Some foreigners have the idea that karma is just an Eastern custom, or that it exists only for those who believe in it and not for those who do not, such as animals and people. Some think that, in fact, karma has no existence at all, merely being some unverifiable theory fantasised by certain Eastern yogis or by Guru Shakyamuni.

Such thoughts are highly erroneous and cause loss of temporal and ultimate peace for oneself and others. Should this poisonous mind be living in the hearts of even the readers of this book, by understanding that it destroys the perfect happiness of many future lives, they should cast it out like used toilet paper.

It may be thought that only Eastern people who believe have past and future lives, and have karma, actions and result: from non-virtuous actions arising suffering result—samsaric suffering—and from virtuous actions arising all happiness—perfect bliss, and freedom from the bondage of samsara. If this were so, then Guru Shakyamuni's followers, such as the ancient Indian and Tibetan Holy Beings who understood each and every existence, would have shown unnecessarily the Teachings of karma from which the undesirable suffering arises. Moreover, Guru Shakyamuni, who had fully-knowing mind and was the founder of these Teachings on karma, this evolution of living beings, action and result, would have been the cause of the suffering of those beings who believe in karma. Also, if this were true for karma, then, by analogy it would be illogical to talk of going to hell for disbelieving the Ten Commandments, because only those who believed in and followed them would go to hell, whereas those who neither believed in God nor followed the Ten Commandments would not. Anyway, all such conceptions are completely wrong.

Living beings, human and non-human, who do not have belief in karma have various sufferings—no matter how much they try to gain comfort there is no

satisfaction, and the limited comfort gained always finishes quickly. Thus, for them, there is no definite peace, and no control over the sufferings of death and rebirth. All this shows clearly that those living beings are not free of karma and that karma exists in fact.

As a common Tibetan proverb says:

> *Nothing happens as it appears in the mind—all is up to karma.*

All our experiences of happiness and suffering depend on karma. No matter how much we desire happiness, if we follow ignorance alone, without respecting karma, we shall have nothing but suffering to experience. We ourselves create each karma. For instance, it is well known that, irrespective of how much some strive for life's comforts, they continually suffer one problem after another, while others always experience comfort and happiness with hardly any effort.

Since we create the karma, and since to respect karma means to correct each tiny action, then how should it be observed? Avoiding non-virtuous actions and practising virtuous ones is observing karma, and to do so we must be able to distinguish between them.

As the great Guru, Nagarjuna said:

> *The action arising from hatred, greed or ignorance is non-virtuous; the action arising from non-hatred, non-greed or non-ignorance is virtuous.*

Also, the great Bodhisattva, Shantideva said

> *From virtuous actions all happiness arises; from non-virtuous actions all suffering arises.*

So the action created by the poisonous impulse, harming ourselves and other living beings, is non-virtuous. The action created by the non-poisonous impulse, benefiting ourselves and other living beings, is virtuous.

Non-virtuous actions only bring the result suffering, causing lower rebirth and suffering even in the upper realms. Virtuous actions only bring the result happiness, such as birth in the upper realms and all happiness.

The worst interruption to creating virtuous actions is attachment to solely the comfort of this life. We should always be conscious of our actions of body, speech and mind, checking up spontaneously, and avoiding the least sinfulness and trying to create even the tiniest virtuous actions.

We should avoid drawing false conclusions on the basis of incomplete understanding and faulty logic, saying for instance, "There are no such results as happiness and happy rebirth from virtuous actions, or suffering and lower rebirth from non-virtuous actions, because I have never heard of nor been taught such things." We are foolish to negate these truths just because we do not have that

knowledge—it is the experience of even a great many ordinary beings who clearly see past and future, let alone that of the Enlightened Being who fully sees the three times and showed the path to discover all this.

There are even common examples to show that the evolution of this karma is logical. There are many karmas created which bring the result in the lifetime.

One Tibetan yogi, *Sang.gyä ye.she*, was giving Teachings to his disciples when his Guru passed by. He pretended not to see him, and after he had finished teaching he went to see his Guru. As he was making prostrations the Guru asked, "Why did you not make prostrations before?" The yogi replied, "I didn't see you before." So telling this lie caused both his eyes to drop out, and despite his Guru's blessings he could not completely recover from this.

The Tibetan yogi, *Log.pön ye.she zang. po*, had an eye disease, so went to the spring to clear it. But the spring became like boiling water. Then he went into retreat to make the Tibetan Guru Yoga, Vajrabhairewa, but even this didn't help much. So he requested another Holy Being for aid, and the latter dreamt of Tara, who explained that it was the result of not following the Guru correctly.

The great yogi, Milarepa, completed his realisations in the lifetime by following correctly the orders of his Guru, Marpa, and by renouncing his life for him.

The great Tibetan yogi, *Drom.tö.pa*, also followed orders correctly and totally offered service. In his later life he not only became far-famed but became the holder of the *Ka.dam.pa* Teachings and made infinitely great work for sentient beings.

There are so many similar examples of ordinary people whose good actions to higher beings brought good results in the lifetime and whose negative actions in the early life brought bad results later. Some get killed as a result of killing others earlier in the lifetime; and it is analogous with actions such as stealing, torturing and cheating.

THE TEN IMMORALITIES OF BODY, SPEECH AND MIND

Each of these immoralities has three results:

1. the result of the fullness of the sin,
2. the result similar to the cause, and
3. the result of the possessed cause,

and are as follows:

1. Killing

a. Rebirth in the hells

b. Although reborn human, there is often much disease and a short life.

c. Rebirth in an inauspicious, unpeaceful, horrible country.

The worst forms of killing are matricide, patricide, and taking the life of an Arhant.

2. Stealing

a. Rebirth in the preta realm.

b. Although reborn human, there is misery due to lack of possessions and to having possessions stolen.

c. Rebirth in a country with many hailstorms.

The worst forms of stealing are thefts from the Guru of the Three Gems.

3. Sexual misconduct

a. Rebirth in the preta realm.

b. Although reborn human, the family or spouse are always accusing or hostile.

c. Rebirth in a very muddy place.

The worst forms of sexual misconduct are intercourse with a parent or Arhant.

4. Telling lies

a. Rebirth in the animal realm.

b. Although reborn human, being accused as a liar and never being believed, whether speaking the truth or not.

c. Rebirth in a filthy place.

The worst form of lying is pretence of Siddhi, such as having control over delusion (e.g., greed and anger) or having realisations (e.g., renunciation and freedom). It is worst to lie to Arhants or Gurus.

5. Slander

a. Rebirth in the hells.

b. Although reborn human, there is separation from relatives and friends.

c. Rebirth in a very low or very high place.

The worst form of slander results in separation of Guru and disciple, or disunity amongst a group of monks or nuns.

6. Harsh speech

a. Rebirth in the hells.

b. Although reborn human, distressing words are often heard.

c. Rebirth in a desert country.

The worst form of harsh speech is the insulting of parents or an Arhant.

7. Gossip mongering

a. Rebirth in the animal realm

b. Although reborn human, there is neither discipline nor virtue in speech.

c. Rebirth in a place with reversed summer and winter seasons, when wells go dry.

The worst form of gossip is to distract religious people; gossip is the lightest of acts, but the greatest waste of time.

8. Covetousness

a. Rebirth in the preta realm.

b. Although reborn human, there is always dissatisfaction, discontent, and failure in ventures.

c. Rebirth in an isolated area.

The worst form of covetousness is the desire for a Noble Being's belongings and spiritual instruments.

9. Malice

a. Rebirth in the hells.

b. Although reborn human, hatred increases through never being believed.

c. Rebirth in a place with only bad tasting food.

The worst form of malice is the thought of committing one of the five inexpiable sins.

10. Heresy

a. Rebirth in the animal realm.

b. Although reborn human, ignorance increases.

c. Rebirth in a place bearing no crops or fruit.

The worst form of heresy is disbelief in the Buddha, his path and his followers.

With any action one has to consider:

1. impulse
2. object
3. the act
4. completion of the act.

The results of the ten moralities are opposite to those of the ten immoralities.

The ten moralities are the basis of all happiness—of every realisation, of Nirvana, and of full, pure Enlightenment. So, abstinence from the ten immoralities is of much greater value than filling many universes with jewels. Things of material worth never bring happiness, realisations or Enlightenment; but they may cause further greed and suffering. Those countless jewels can all be lost without causing rebirth in suffering realms for many lives. Only Dharma practice allows fulfilment of the purpose of the human rebirth.

KARMA IS DEFINITE

Good karma causes happiness; bad karma causes suffering. It is not possible for good karma to result in suffering nor bad karma in happiness, just as a lethal, poisonous plant cannot bear life-saving fruit.

Mountains may crumble, oceans run dry, moons, suns and stars can fall, whole galaxies come and go, but the results of karma never change. Unless I attempt to avoid karmic results, they will certainly be experienced.

KARMA IS EXPANDABLE

One tiny karma can cause many results, just as one small seed can produce many thousands. There are countless examples of expanded karmic results, such as a single second of anger with a highly realised being causing many eons of suffering in the lower realms.

The invention of the atomic bomb is another example. The inventor's negative motive—desiring fame and reputation for temporal happiness—resulted in a negative creation and those who also contributed to this creation were caused to have negative actions. Further negativities resulted—the people of one nation became proud and callous, those of other nations became jealous and afraid. The bomb was exploded, bringing extreme suffering to innumerable beings. All those who contributed to the bomb's creation will suffer for eons, yet the original hope was for peace and happiness. A very high scientific accomplishment, but its inventor will have to suffer each result that harmed others through his creation.

This shows how any external development cannot bring peace—the motives are temporal. If such means caused real, satisfied peace they would have been shown long ago by the Perfect One.

All pure, religious people take care in every action of mind, speech and body and try to accumulate merits—the results of good karma—as they know that happiness and suffering depend on karma.

The pure essence of Dharma is not to create bad karma. Religion is thus an infallible method of God, or Perfect Buddha; living in the nature of highest compassion, rendering not the least infinitesimal harm to a single sentient being.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPERIENCE THE RESULT WITHOUT CREATING THE KARMA

I cannot suffer the karmic punishment of a thief if I do not steal. Nor can I enjoy a pleasant life without reason or cause, without being conscious of each of my actions.

THE RESULT OF THE KARMA CREATED IS NEVER LOST

The specific result of any created karma is never lost, but need not be experienced if appropriate action is taken. The influence of karma can be stopped by

insight into the nature of things and by attentive concentration to that which has been perceived.

As well as not creating further cause for suffering, I must avoid the results of past causes by eliminating the conditions required for their expression. It is analogous to the potential of a seed—a plant will grow unless the seed or the conditions, the four elements, are destroyed.

The Vinaya Teaching *Dül.wa.lung* says:

> *The accumulated karmas of even one hundred eons are never lost. If the aggregates (cause and conditions) and proper times coincide, those responsible receive the result.*

CONFESSION

The result of merits, happiness, can be blocked by the destructiveness of heresy and anger. Similarly, the potential of tremendous sins can be completely extinguished by deep, pure confession with great feeling, using the four powerful remedies:

1. Taking Refuge in the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
2. Repentance, the strength of which determines the strength of the following:
3. Penance, to purify negativity, and
4. Vowing not to repeat the sin.

Confession is like a fire and negativities are the grain which can be burnt. Religious people fear the result of, and so confess, any negative karma. Likewise do they dedicate merits to Buddha when they create positive karma. They do this to bring happiness to all sentient beings.

Karmic result can be experienced during this life, the next, or in any future lifetime. What causes the countless billions of karmas to ripen at different times and manifest in samsara?

A Sutra says:

> *The heavier, closer or more habitual the karma, the sooner comes the result. If all are the same intensity, the result of the first committed comes first.*

The Tibetan people regard the practice of morality as their constitution and as the best way to shape their lives. Monks keeping high vows are respected and recognised as pure and Holy objects, to be offered service. To the laymen, such as monks are as diamonds. Keeping precepts is far higher than working for the happiness of a secular life. Temporal happiness has been enjoyed since beginningless time, yet has brought no satisfaction.

Tantric practice, the method of achieving everlasting peace and complete freedom, must be based on the understanding of reality's true nature—without the fundamental necessity of creating good karma it is all in vain, like trying to make a plant grow quickly by pouring water into space.

As realisations increase, profound points of the permissive and prohibitive precepts can be seen. But the most subtle points of karma are the object of only the Buddha's thought. Even Arhants with great prophetic and other psychic powers had to ask Guru Shakyamuni about the deepest aspects of karma.

PRAYER TO BE SAID AFTER MEDITATION TWO

From the Profound Tantric Text, Guru Puja

With this prayer visualise:

Guru Shakyamuni, surrounded by Vajradhara, the Infinite Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Arhants, Dakas and Dakinis, many other Tantric Deities, the Protecting Deities, and all the Holy Gurus in the direct and indirect Lineage of the Teachings, sending much light to me and to all sentient beings, who are visualised as surrounding me.

This light is absorbed into me and into all sentient beings, purifying all negativities and obscurations and bringing all Knowledge—especially the Knowledge that being in the three lower realms has the suffering of being in a burning fire, so that from the heart I may take Refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and make great efforts in practice and avoidance and in the collection of merits.

NGÄN.SONG	DUG.NGÄL	BAR.WÄ	ME.JIG.NÄ
evil gone lower realms	*suffering*	*burning*	*fire fear*
NYING.NÄ	KÖN.CH'OG	SUM.LA	KYAB.DRO.ZHING
heart from	*precious*	*three to*	*refuge go*
DIG.PONG	GE.TSOG	T'A.D'AG	DRUB.PA.LA
sin abandon	*virtues heap*	*all*	*attain to*
TZÖN.PA	LHUR.LEN	J'E.PAR	J'IN.GY'I.LOB
effort	*devotedly grasp*	*to do*	*please bless*

(Please bless me and all sentient beings to fear the burning fire of the three lower realms of suffering, to take Refuge from the heart, and to continue putting wilful effort into actions to abandon all negativities and to accomplish all merits.)

After this prayer, complete the visualisation as described on pp. 16-18 and dedicate the merits with the prayer on the last page.

MEDITATION THREE

THE GENERAL SUFFERINGS OF SAMSARA

Even if born in the upper realms, we still suffer in samsara, the suffering of bondage and its cause, caught in the circle of the twelve dependent links.

Shantideva said:

> *One will only come up again and again in the happy realms, enjoy samsaric pleasures with greed, and then suffer for infinite times after the death of this all.*

Using our present rebirth only to enjoy samsaric pleasures is being like a dumb animal that eats the grass at the edge of a cliff, in constant danger of falling off.

Previous yogis have greatly emphasised the necessity of attempting to subdue our mind well in a secluded place, seeing with dauntless renouncing mind that samsara is full only of catastrophe and suffering. Some beings of limited wisdom think that staying in a secluded place to think about the shortcomings of samsara with a renounced mind is a Hinayana practice. They think that this is not the Mahayana way because Mahayanists are supposed to work for other beings, and cannot do so by remaining in solitude, avoiding contact with the masses in the city. This is childish thinking, showing neither taste for nor any idea of Mahayana practice. It is not like that, for Bodhisattvas need greater aversion to samsara than those who follow the lesser vehicle. The Hinayanist meditates on the shortcomings of samsara and avoids delusions only for his own Liberation; the Bodhisattva has to realise the total shortcomings of samsara and use many methods to get rid of them with great compassion, which arises from remembering the sentient beings wandering in samsara. The Bodhisattva needs a hundred thousand times greater aversion to samsara than the Hinayanist, who follows the path for the sake of only himself.

Some people of limited understanding think that the Bodhisattva who follows the Paramitayana needs this greater aversion, but that the Bodhisattva who follows the most supreme Tantrayana doesn’t need to achieve aversion to samsara. Those who have such distorted notions only show the nature of their ignorance—the complete lack of knowledge of the purpose for following the Vajrayana Path—and are as foolish as those who could try to pluck fruit from thin air, not understanding the nature of seeds and stems.

Without achieving understanding of suffering, the doors to Vajrayana, Paramitayana and even Hinayana are closed. It is as hopeless as trying to get into the inner court of the king’s palace when one hasn’t even a visa for the country, let alone the other necessary credentials. This only causes oneself confusion. There has never been even one Bodhisattva who entered the Vajrayana Path without having depended upon receiving full aversion to samsara.

Only one with an egocentric mind would try to practise the Mahamudra without the practice of renunciation or understanding the nature of samsara. This would be like eating poisonous honey without knowing that it is poisonous.

Beings who have the Wisdom Eye should be careful that they understand the right way to practise. It is absolutely essential that yogis following the most supreme Tantrayana develop strong renunciation of samsara through strongly and extensively meditating on its sufferings.

One of the greatest Indian Yogic Tantric practitioners, *Lu.yi.pa*, was instructed by the Vajrayogini—a female aspect of the Buddha – to give up the temporal life and to make the dauntless effort to arouse strong aversion to samsara, for this is an absolute necessity for those who wish to practise Tantricism. According to the Vajrayogini's instruction, Lu.yi.pa went to a solitary place and through much austere practice received Siddhi. Because of their single-pointed practice in solitary places constellations of yogis have received Siddhi. The great yogis have said in their Tantric Teachings that even the power and possessions of a king have to be meditated on as suffering.

Having the fully-knowing Mind, the great Guru *Tzong.k'a.pa* said in the prayer of the Tantric Deity, Heruka:

> *Living beings travel on the right path by having full unshakeable belief in it, thinking deeply on the perfect human rebirth: its meaningfulness, rarity and perishability; on the suffering of the lower realms; on karma; and on the Refuge guiding them.*

WHAT IS NIRVANA?

The complete release from samsara—the formation of true suffering and its cause—is Nirvana. To receive Nirvana we must have

1. effortless, energetic inspiration. This arises from
2. strong, effortless renunciation of samsara. This arises from
3. strong aversion to samsara, which depends on
4. deep, clear insight into the true nature of samsara.

Sha.kya.wa said:

> *The experienced, learned ones fear the upper realms as they do the narak. It is so rare for beings to fear any of the realms of samsara.*

Every past realised Indian pandit and Tibetan ascetic Lama was released from samsara by truly seeing the whole of samsara in its suffering nature, like a blaze of fire with no real pleasure wherever we go. For them the mind renouncing

samsara generates the energy to become Enlightened and work for all sentient beings until samsara ends.

Furthermore, this fully renouncing mind is most important because all the past Buddhas' Enlightenment was received through renunciation. Subsequently, galaxies of numberless Indian pandits, their disciples and Tibetan monks and ascetics became Enlightened in their lifetimes through a pure, renounced mind. They taught all their experienced methods to their disciples, so the experiences have not been lost. This is why Tibetan monks still have the opportunity to achieve real experiences by developing their minds. Modern Europeans who are fortunate enough to study the Teachings can emulate these meditators and also achieve these experiences. Therefore, we have this present chance and it arose from all the original renounced minds, which have come inexhaustably to us. So, if we really achieve fully renounced mind, it helps in a limitless way for the numberless living beings, until samsara ends.

What has been stopping us from achieving the limitlessly valuable renounced mind? It is the ignorance that uncontrollably sees samsaric enjoyments as happiness. We wallow in the quagmire of samsara, believing completely that it is beautiful, yet hope to receive Enlightenment—an Enlightenment that no-one has ever received—achieving only suffering as shown by our Gurus: greed and ignorance.

For all those ancient Indian pandits and ascetics, the best everlasting psychiatry in the power of the mind was full renunciation. We can prove it for ourselves by living that experience, but it comes only from pure practice and understanding how samsaric nature is truly in the nature of suffering. That is why Guru Shakyamuni showed us the four Noble Truths.



Figure 8—Endless knot

THE TEACHING OF THE FULLY ENLIGHTENED ONE

Basis	Path	Result
Absolute Truth Relative truth	Wisdom and method	Two aspects of the Buddha: The Holy Body of Dharma The Holy Body of Form

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

I. TRUE SUFFERING

Has four aspects

	(True realisations)	Wrong conceptions
1.	Being transience because its phenomena change in the minutest moment.	That suffering is permanent.
2.	Being suffering because a. suffering of feelings, b. samsaric happiness, and c. uncontrolled because of delusion and karma.	That suffering is happiness.
3.	Being voidness because everything is void of not having any connection with its cause.	That suffering is unconnected from its cause.
4.	Being non-selfness because it depends on numbers of objects.	That suffering is a self-entity not depending on parts.

II. TRUE CAUSE OF SUFFERING

Has four aspects

	(True realisations)	Wrong conceptions
1.	Being the cause because it is delusion and karma.	That there is no cause of (reason for) suffering.
2.	Being all-arising because it produces frequent suffering.	That suffering arises from one cause only (and not from co-operative causes).
3.	Being strongly arising because it strongly brings the result of suffering.	That suffering is created by God, i.e., some other being.
4.	Being co-operative causes because it is these that bring about the different sufferings.	That suffering is momentarily impermanent though its nature is being permanent.

III. TRUE CESSATION OF SUFFERING

(True realisations)	Wrong conceptions
1. Being cessation because it is not tied by delusion and karma (*Ching.pa*, tied).	That there is no Liberation (*Tar.pa*, release).
2. Being peace because it is not tied by delusion.	That any phenomena arising from delusion are peace.
3. Being perfection because it is not tied, and in the nature of happiness and panacea.	That some delusions are perfect.
4. Being definite removal because it unties from the suffering arising again.	That suffering arises again after being removed once.

IV. TRUE PATH OF CESSATION

Has four aspects

(True realisations)	Wrong conceptions
1. Being the path because the right-seeing path fully sees the non-selfness.	That there is no path to Liberation.
2. Being Wisdom because the path goes against the delusions.	That the Wisdom of fully realising non-selfness is not the path to Liberation.
3. Being attainment because it is fully attained through fully realising the nature of the path.	That attainment in meditations, such as ordinary Samadhi meditation or Chakra meditation, without full renunciation of samsara is the path to Liberation.
4. Being the definite remover because it eradicates the whole of delusion.	That there is no path to complete cessation of suffering.

THE THREE UPPER REALMS OF SUFFERING

1. Human

There are sufferings in the human realms as well as in the others. The beggar and the rich man alike have problems: mental and physical. There are problems of families, societies and countries. The king and the populace have their problems. No matter how I try to solve them, problems always remain.

2. Asura (*Lha.ma.yin*)

In this realm too, there is always the suffering of fighting and discord resulting from jealousy. The Asuras are mischievous gods.

There is no way for them to perceive the Absolute Truth.

3. Sura (*Lha*)

Gods of the senses

These have three kinds of suffering:

a. They are usually reborn in the three lower realms, and have the karmic power to see their realm of rebirth for seven days prior to death. During this time they undergo the five signs of death.

All this causes incredible suffering.

b. Embarrassment at not having as many possessions as other gods.

c. Being killed or injured by many different sorts of weapons; they are always fighting.

They can be banished to the Asura realm.

Gods of form and formlessness

These gods have many distractions, such as being unconscious for many eons. They have no control over the length of time they spend in their realm.

Therefore, the whole of samsara is really like a blazing inferno, and it is not definite that I shall not be born in one of these suffering realms.

THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH: TRUE SUFFERING

Suffering can be clearly understood by considering the following three methods of classification.

I. THE EIGHT SUFFERINGS.

1. The suffering of rebirth

a. The suffering of the birth.

Beings born in the narak, as a constantly suffering preta, or from the egg and the womb are all born with much heavy suffering.

P'ag.pa.tog.me said:

> *The Rebirths of all other beings are the same, even my upper rebirth. We are all born with suffering.*

b. The suffering of rebirth into wickedness (depravity).

From the seed of ignorance springs the rebirth, giving delusion its birth, its existence and its increase. Hence it is difficult to use the life for virtuous work or to control the suffering as desired.

c. The suffering of rebirth into a suffering realm.

Rebirth into the worlds of the senses, of form or of formlessness inevitably brings the sufferings of old age, sickness and death.

d. The suffering of rebirth into a deluded place.

In samsara the negative minds of greed, hatred and ignorance manifest in relation to objects of beauty, ugliness and indifference respectively. As these negative minds arise, the body and mind become unsubdued and experience suffering.

e. The suffering of separation.

From the moment of rebirth the life goes towards the inevitable karmic death. This totally unwanted event brings suffering to the uncontrolled mind and body; instead of release from suffering, death only brings more.

Rebirth in the womb

Nagarjuna said:

> *All over one is encased by an extremely horrible odour. It is dirty, clouded and very dark. The whole body is compressed and one suffers greatly by living in the womb.*

The womb is full of thick fluid, secretions and excretions, filthy odours, and innumerable subtle germs. It is narrow, with many ridges and irregularities.

The baby usually faces backwards, towards the ka-ka of the mother's food, spit and so on. Above the baby are the mother's intestines, containing old food, bile, etc. Hence, the baby feels all kinds of filthy dark things going up and down and its body suffers from things eaten—acid and sour foods, hot and cold liquids, spicy or heavy food, much food or a little, rough or greasy food, and sweets.

The baby is nourished by unclean liquid and feels as if in a hot quagmire of filth. The heat of the mother gives suffering to the baby's body, and it feels extremely hot, as if burnt or in a pit of coals.

When the mother moves the baby suffers: running, jumping, sitting, or in sexual intercourse. It feels pain when the mother is near a fire or wears tight clothing. Even its own posture makes it feel as if there were a stick running through its body.

There is great suffering during and soon after birth. At the time of leaving the womb, due to karmic air, its head is pushed down, its legs up, and its arms inwards; the hip bones are compressed towards each other. As a large object forced with difficulty through a too small and grudgingly yielding opening, the body feels like a raw wound, and turns blue.

It is born covered with partly dried and sticky secretions and excretions. The lips and throat and heart are dry. The contact of the skin with the outside atmosphere feels like that with very rough plants; the touch of the hand and cloth are like that of a sword. Held in the lap, the baby feels

the suffering of a cow with its skin peeled off, being eaten by other animals.

A baby cries because it is suffering. But I see it only from my side, my vision and feelings, and don't consider the other.

2. The suffering of old age

a. Decaying.

The beautiful-looking body becomes increasingly decrepit with each passing year, and loses its strength in a very short time.

b. Losing the power of the senses.

E.g., not being able to see clearly or hear distinctly.

c. losing enjoyments.

Not finding satisfaction with objects or material pleasures, such as impaired digestion causing loss of enjoyment of favourite foods.

d. Losing the power of the mind.

Forgetting names, places, ideas and so on.

e. Worrying about life shortening and death approaching.

All in all, old age is like a very rotten orange, with no beauty without or within. It is full of worms, and has such a taste of sorrow.

It is easy to see how old people are. And looking old is such a big problem in the West, a bigger problem than other big problems.

I should visualise several old men and women, putting myself in their place, and check up, suffering the sicknesses, the physical changes, and the pain of being unable to enjoy beautiful objects to which I am attached, and having to accept and use undesirable foods, treatments and medicines. And having so much worry of death; when it comes there is the great suffering of separation from the body, relatives, friends and desirable enjoyments.

3. The suffering of sickness

4. The suffering of death

It is extremely important to make repeated observations on the sufferings of birth and death.

5. The suffering of release from beautiful objects and attachments

Separation and fear of separation from loved ones, enjoyments and possessions causes suffering during the whole life and at its end.

6. The suffering of encounters with ugly (disagreeable) objects

Suffering arises by contact with an enemy, having a catastrophe or involvement in problem situations.

7. The suffering of not obtaining desirable objects

There is suffering from not finding what is sought or from not obtaining satisfaction in any enjoyments.

The whole problem arises from the three principal negative minds, their objects, and the three resulting feelings.

a. Greed: beautiful object: happiness

b. Hatred: ugly (disagreeable) object: suffering

c. Ignorance: indifferent object: indifference.

8. The suffering of this body created by delusion and karma

a. Taking this deluded body causes suffering even in future lives.

b. Because of the existence of this new formation, all the present life sufferings, old age and death arise.

c. Suffering of suffering and

d. Changeable suffering—both arise because the body is controlled by delusion and karma.

e. Pervading suffering, the suffering of conditioned existence, exists merely because the body exists. I am born in the nature of suffering—I decay and perish.

How to stop the three negative feelings

An instant, powerful method, like fire, to destroy the negative minds of greed, ignorance and hatred and their objects, is the Enlightened One's method to bring inner and outer peace, the well-subdued mind. But Guru Shakyamuni's experienced solution is ineffective if we do not live in the right practice.

Living in the right practice generates much faith, understanding and energy, leading to control, and these are the sublime qualities of his Teachings.

Päl.dän.ch'ö.dr'ag said:

> *Ordinary beings are always attached to the self-entity "I," saying "I, I, I," causing them to be attached to desirable objects. That attachment obscures the faults of ignorance.*

As the conception of the self is the source of all samsaric problems, immediately a problem arises, the mind should be brought inside, away from distractions, and made to check up on the "I."

So, when the problems arise, there are several methods for dealing with them:

1. We should try to see the "I" as a non-self-entity (*Rang.gya.t'ub.pä.dzä.yö*: self-entity), and the object of the problem in the same way. Also we should try to see the voidness of both "I" and object (*Rang.shin.gy'i.tong.pa*: voidness (emptied) of self nature).
2. We should think of the shortcomings of the delusions—greed, ignorance and hatred—and react to these negative minds with feelings, as to a burning fire, remembering that they
   a. cause the sufferings of the six samsaric realms,
   b. prevent my Enlightenment,
   c. prevent my achieving the realisations of Bodhisattvas and Arhants,
   d. distract from full renunciation, Bodhicitta and right view,
   e. have given harm since beginningless time,
   f. will continue to harm and give endless suffering,
   g. do the same thing for all sentient beings, and
   h. are my worst, most dangerous enemy.
3. We can change the aspect of objects: beauty into ugliness or vice versa.
4. We should view the object in terms of permanence and impermanence.
5. A lesser method for moments of uncontrolled mind is to make the mind like stone or a piece of wood.
6. We can think "the opposite is true, the complete opposite."

But, of themselves these words mean nothing. These methods depend on understanding and feeling. It is most important to try to live in the consciousness of these methods.

To give up this suffering samsara I must fully recognise its cause and let it go.

For all samsara and the true nature of suffering there are two causes: ignorance (giving rise to delusion and karma) and craving.

These are causes because they are the root of suffering and are continually arising, bringing the suffering result frequently and strongly.

II. THE SIX SUFFERINGS

1. **The suffering of the indefinite nature of samsaric pleasures.** Whatever happiness they bring, it never lasts.
2. **The suffering of dissatisfaction**. I am constantly striving for more and better samsaric pleasures, not realising that I have experienced each and every one infinite times and am still not content.
3. **The suffering of leaving the body again and again**. No matter how beautiful my samsaric body, it will have to be given up for another.
4. **The suffering of joining with suffering again and again**. I have experienced each of the infinite samsaric sufferings infinite times.
5. **The suffering-of rising and falling**. The result of being higher is to become lower; the result of a collection is its finish; meeting leads to separation; and life is ended by death. Whatever is samsaric in nature brings suffering.
6. **The suffering of being without a helper**. I cannot share my experience of problems; born alone, alone I die.

III. THE THREE SUFFERINGS

1. **Suffering of suffering**: the pain and discomfort of disease, injury and other physical problems; mental anguish. Even lower beings recognise this sort of suffering.
2. **Changeable suffering**: all samsaric pleasure is changeable in nature—it does not last and, in time, turns into suffering of suffering. Attachment to samsaric pleasure brings rebirth in the lower realms. Even humans find this suffering difficult to recognise.
3. **Pervading suffering**: my whole body is in the nature of suffering—there is no part of it that never causes problems. From pervading suffering, the result of delusion and karma, arise from suffering of suffering and changeable suffering, and it is much more difficult to recognise than the others.

THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH: THE TRUE CAUSE OF SUFFERING: THE DELUSIONS

I. THE SIX PRINCIPAL DELUSIONS (Root defilements) (*Tza.nyön dr'ug*)

1. **Ignorance** (*Ma.rig.pa*)

   This is not understanding the four Noble Truths, the nature of samsara, the law of karma. It is the cause of all delusions.

2. **Greed** (*Dö.ch'ag*)

   This is craving for the world of the senses, for form, and for objects considered to be beautiful in their self-nature.

3. **Anger** (*K'ong.tr'o*)

   This is the opposite to humility and patience. It is the greatest barrier to Liberation and Enlightenment for myself and others.

4. **Pride** (*Nga.ky'äl)*

   a. General pride: I am uplifted by feeling higher than others.
   b. Double pride: I am on the same level as others, yet feel superior to them and extraordinary.
   c. Pride over pride: even in a very special group, I feel the most special of all.
   d. Pride of my consciousness: by regarding the five skandhas as self-I, this delusion arises. Without the five skandhas there would be nothing left of pride, but until I know Shunyata I cannot know who the "I" really is. This is the worst pride and causes those before.
   e. Pride of feeling (perception): I think I have special knowledge, unaware that it is only samsaric knowledge and not Dharma Wisdom.
   f. Equal pride: I feel that I am just as important as a very important person, or only slightly less so, e.g., "I am almost as Enlightened as Guru Shakyamuni."
   g. Misbelieving pride: I take wrong influences or methods to be correct, e.g., that sexual intercourse is the essential Tantric practice.

   Any knowledge that is not, for Liberation is neither real nor pure Knowledge. I should think of death and the shortcomings of pride. Great pure love stops pride.

5. **Doubt** (*T'e.tsom*)

   Superstitions of two points is the greatest barrier to achieving Liberation. When I fully know the nature of Enlightenment, all doubts will be resolved.

   Nagarjuna said:

   > *Those who doubt powerfully have the power to realise the Truth, provided they investigate their doubts.*

6. **The doctrine of delusion** (*Ta.wa*)

   Ignorant beliefs, or wrong realisations.

   a. Belief that the five skandhas are "I."
   b. Belief that the "I" ceases.

c. Heresy—no belief, or not believing that immoral causes bring suffering or that moral causes bring happiness.
d. Belief that the above three are best for me to believe in.
e. The wrong conception that the main moral conduct is other than the real one, e.g., belief that the only way to reach Enlightenment is by bathing in a certain river. I cannot clean negativities by washing in water.

II. THE TWENTY SECONDARY (CLOSER) DELUSIONS (*Nye.nyön.nyi.shu*)

1. ***Tr'o.wa***

   Performing and provoking violent actions through anger.

2. ***K'ön.dzin***

   Bearing a grudge or ill-will for a short or long time.

3. ***Tsig.pa***

   Speaking harshly or insultingly because of anger or a grudge, causing much pain to others.

4. ***Nam.par.tse.wa***

   Harming others through carelessness and lack of compassion because of anger.

5. ***Tr'ag.d'og***

   Envy of others' perfections and attachment to my own gifts and notoriety. This unhappy, uncontrolled mind is a basis of all other negativities.

6. ***Yo***

   Attachment to the pleasure of receiving respect and thing, heightening my vices and crooked mind. Arising from greed, ignorance or hatred, it is a cunning, pretending mind—wanting to continue but also hide itself. These vices greatly disturb my achieving perfect happiness.

7. ***Gyu***

   Because of ignorance and greed, I betray other beings by pretending or saying that I have achieved certain knowledge, although this is not true. It is done to gain reputation and position.

8. ***Ngo.tsa.me.pa***

   Not forbearing in the senses yet not feeling shame. Part of the three poisonous minds, it increases principal and secondary delusions, and causes many others.

9. ***Dr'el.me.pa***

   Not performing virtuous actions, neither caring nor feeling shame. Also part of the three poisonous minds, it increases principal and secondary delusions and causes many others.

10. ***Ch'ab.pa***

    Not wanting to follow Dharma instructions given by another. I hide my defilements and confess them neither to myself nor to others.

11. ***Ser.na***

    Miserliness; being tightly attached because of greed. The remedy is charity.

12. ***Gyag.pa***

    Attachment to the physical perfection of my body and to being without sicknesses. There is arrogance arising from my attachment; the basis of other deluded minds.

13. ***Ma.d'ä.pa***

    Neither believing nor having faith in the right objects, which is ignorance in Dharma practice and causes laziness.

14. ***Le.lo***

    Laziness; enjoyment of temporal happiness but not of virtuous work. Much is lost in the non-performance of virtuous acts, and this is the opposite of energy and perseverance.

15. ***Bag.me.pa***

    Carelessness in not seriously following the practices, and not following the precepts prohibiting carelessness. The three poisons cause this careless mind, decreasing virtue and increasing nonvirtue.

16. ***Je.ngä***

    An unclear mind which forgets the object of meditation or the Dharma subject and causes much distraction.

17. ***She.zhin.me.pa***

    Non-consciousness. A deluded mind, distracting me from consciously following the actions of the three doors of body, speech and mind.

18. ***Mug.pa***

    A dark ignorant mind, feeling mentally and physically heavy. Not having the control to grasp the object of meditation correctly nor to keep the mind inside. This leads to delusion.

19. ***Gö.pa***

    Agitation due to greed; uncontrolled interruption of mental quiescence; being caught up by beautiful relative things and distracted by objects.

20. ***Nam.yong***

    Being distracted by other objects and not keeping one-pointedness of mind on the subject of meditation. Caused by the three poisons.

III. FOUR CHANGEABLE MENTAL ACTIONS (*Zhän.gyur.zhi*)

These "intermediate dharmas" can be positive or negative. The power of motivation can turn virtue into non-virtue or indifference, and vice versa.

1. ***Nyi***

   Sleep. The action of the principal mind is absorbed and without control to see or think objects because of the uninterruptedly appearing darkness.

2. ***Gyö***

   Repentance. The mental action of feeling upset for doing past actions.

3. ***Tog.pa***

   The mental action of seeking the gross aspect in the object.

4. ***Chö.pa***

   The mental action of seeking the subtle aspect in the object.

HOW DELUSION AND KARMA BIND US TO SAMSARA, THE WHEEL OF LIFE (Skt., Samsaracakra; Tib., *Sib.pe.k'or.lo*)

Another way to understand the suffering nature of samsara is to meditate on the gradual evolution of the twelve dependent links, as Guru Shakyamuni showed. This is represented by the symbolic drawing of the wheel of life, also called the circle of the twelve dependent originations (Skt., Pratitya samutpada; Tib., *Ten.drel. chu.nyi*). It is held in the mouth of the Lord of Death, showing how all beings who live in the six realms of samsara are controlled by impermanence and death. The wheel is also supported by his hands and feet, symbolising how these beings are trapped by true suffering and the true cause of suffering—delusion and karma.

I and most other sentient beings are suffering in this circle of interdependent origination. Its root is ignorance, which is the complete opposite of the Dharma Wisdom that perceives the Absolute reality.

1. **Ignorance** (*Ma.rig.pa*)

   The blind man shown on the wheel of life symbolises the ignorant person, who does not see where he is going, where he will be reborn, what he has suffered or what he will suffer in rebirth. Ignorance is the cause of the 84,000 delusions.

   There are two kinds of ignorance:

   a. Ignorance of Absolute Truth, which binds me more strongly to samsara. The main purpose of all the Teachings of Guru Shakyamuni is to remove ignorance by realisation of the Absolute Truth, just as the main purpose of medicine is to remove sickness.

   b. Ignorance of karma arises from ignorance of Absolute Truth; it causes rebirth in the three lower realms.

2. **Karmic formation** (*Du.j'e.kyi.lä*)

   Ignorance generates karmic formation.

   This is symbolised by a man producing clay pots. Just as a clay pot can be fashioned into many sizes and shapes, so does the creation of different karmas bring different results.

   Karma may be meritorious, demeritorious or indifferent.

3. **Consciousness** (*Nam.she*)

   Karmic formation generates consciousness.

   This is symbolised by a monkey with fruit in its hand, swinging from tree to tree, to show that consciousness, bearing karmic impressions, joins past to present and present to future. The monkey is uncontrolled, impure, because its outlook depends on its position in the tree, just as my consciousness depends on karma.

Consciousness is the mind, which perceives the different aspects of objects.

There are six kinds of consciousness: those of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.

5. **Name and form** (*Ming.zug*)

Consciousness generates name (mind) and form (body).

This is symbolised by a man rowing a boat, and shows that to do so, many conditions such as the boat, the oars-man, the ocean, etc., are necessary. Similarly, name and form could not exist without the five skandhas (aggregates).

The skandha of form (*Zug.kyi p'ung.po*) is the fertilised egg, and the skandhas of feeling (*Tsor.wä p'ung.po*), of cognition (*Du.she kyi p'ung.po*), of compounded phenomena (volition) (*Du.j'e kyi p'ung.po*) and of consciousness (*Nam.she p'ung.po*), inhabiting the fertilised egg, are the name.

5. **Six sense organs** (*Kye.ch'e.dr'ug*)

Name and form generate the six sense organs.

This is symbolised by an empty house. From the distance the house looks full and lived in, but it is empty. Similarly, the six sense organs are empty because they are meaningless without an object.

For the six sense organs there are also six outer objects and six inner sense bases.

6. **Contact** (*Reg.pa*)

Six sense organs generate contact.

This is symbolised by the contact of a man and a woman, the meeting of sense organs with their objects.

There are six contacts.

7. **Feeling** (*Tsor.wa*)

Contact generates feeling.

This is symbolised by a man who, with an arrow in his eye, is suffering because of his contact with an object. Without contact there is no feeling; therefore, if my mind is uncontrolled, I am better off to avoid contact with objects that lead to more greed and further suffering. This is why Guru Shakyamuni, with great compassion, made the rule that one should be well contained and have few possessions.

There are three kinds of feeling:

a. suffering,

b. happiness, and

c. indifference.

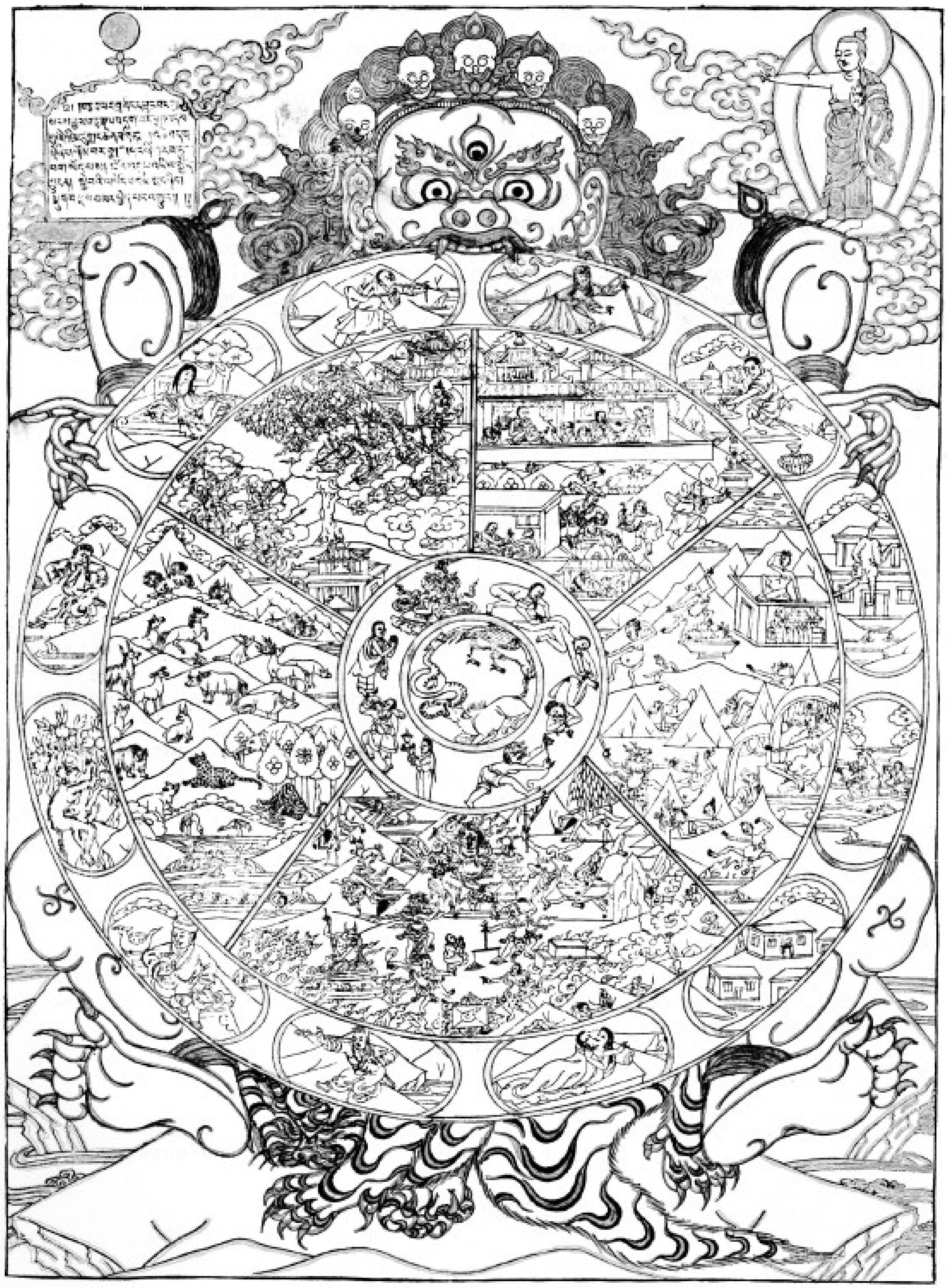


Figure 9—Wheel of Life

8. **Craving** *(Se.pa)*

   Contact and feeling generate craving.

   This is symbolised by a man drinking wine. Just as this man's thirst is never satisfied, so the person deluded by greed is never satisfied and craves more things. This greed ruins the present, and many future lives.

   There are three kinds of craving, and all cause suffering:

   a. desiring release from fear and ugly objects,
   b. desiring no release from beautiful objects to which I am attached, and
   c. attachment to the body, fearing loss of the "I" at death.

9. **Grasping** (*Len.pa)*

   Craving generates grasping.

   This is symbolised by a monkey picking fruit from a tree. Having tasted one fruit, he clings to the tree for more and more. Grasping is created by craving and procreates becoming, just as human beings grasp at and cling to their physical bodies. This grasping causes greed, hatred and ignorance, bringing much suffering.

   There are four kinds of grasping, and all cause suffering:

   a. attachment to beauty,
   b. attachment to wrong beliefs or doctrines, such as the belief that karma, and past and future lives are non-existent,
   c. clinging to the wrong conception of the self-existent "I," and
   d. holding the belief that immoralities, e.g., sacrificing living beings or deriving sexual happiness, are pure methods of receiving Liberation.

10. **Becoming** (*Si.pa*)

    Grasping at the body generates becoming.

    This is symbolised by a pregnant woman. The greater my attachment to the physical body, the sooner will rebirth come. The becoming caused by ignorance is strengthened because craving and grasping conditioned it.

    There are four kinds of becoming, all under the control of delusion and karma:

    a. the becoming of rebirth,
    b. the becoming of death,
    c. the becoming of intermediate, and
    d. the becoming of lifetime.

11. **Rebirth** (*Kye.wa*)

    Becoming generates rebirth.

This is symbolised by a woman giving birth. The skandhas are determined by delusion and karma, and determine the form of the present rebirth.

There are four kinds of rebirth:

a. in the womb,

b. from an egg,

c. by heat, and

d. intuitive, i.e., not needing the bodies of parents.

12. **Old age** (*Ga.wa*) and **death** (*Ch'i.wa*)

Birth usually generates old age.

This is symbolised by an old man walking with a cane. Becoming old is the result of delusion and karma.

Birth or old age generate death.

This is symbolised by a corpse. Death ends the life, and the round of existence circles again.

I do not desire suffering, so I must stop circling in samsara. To do so I must overcome delusion and karma. Ignorance leads to action, which leaves impressions on the consciousness. The results of those may appear in this lifetime, the next, or in subsequent lives.

The trip of the twelve dependents may be completed in two or three lifetimes. An example follows:

a. In this lifetime I ignorantly create the karma for rebirth as a rat, this impression being left on my consciousness. But for the rest of my life I give up attachment to the samsaric life, become celibate and keep the precepts purely. So the craving, grasping and becoming of the rat rebirth are interrupted by those of the desired perfect human rebirth.

b. I am reborn human, living in perfect chance, and the seven results from the dependence of a perfect human rebirth finish with this second life. But as this life is not spent in pure practice,

c. rebirth as a rat occurs because its craving, grasping and becoming are now the strongest. In this life the dependence of the rat finishes.

Nagarjuna said:

> *Two deluded actions (links 2 and 10) arise from three deluded causes (links 1, 8 and 9); seven uncontrolled results (links 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 12) arise from those two deluded actions. Again three deluded causes arise from these seven results. Such a wheel of life goes round and round.*

The Teaching of Guru Shakyamuni that the six samsaric realms and their suffering are only internally caused by delusion and karma was believed and realised

by a great number of ancient Indian and Tibetan pandits. They, as did Guru Shakyamuni, gave up princely lives and kingdoms to penetrate fully the Absolute Truth, because they realised the external nature of samsara.

A person walking in thorns that pierce his flesh realises that the resultant suffering derives only from his internal state of ignorance. He could wear shoes and prevent his suffering. The suffering of samsara is also internally caused by ignorance. But if the nature of the thorns was the cause of suffering (external) and the cause was not in the nature of the sufferer, then even shoes would not prevent the suffering. And if the cause of samsaric suffering were external, then there would be no means for controlling samsara. Nor would there be any method of attaining final peace, of completing the state of perfect happiness by extinguishing samsara. Even medicine could not cure sickness. There would be neither perfect happiness nor people's suffering.

But people do suffer, as shown by the world's thirst for peace. Yet as we can experience greater and greater suffering, we can experience higher and higher happiness.

If it were God alone who created the samsaric realms and their suffering, then there would be no reason to follow the Teachings to be released, or to have the Teachings shown by God. All attempts would be in vain since every living being would have a samsaric nature rooted in suffering by God. If God were the cause of samsara he would be the creator of ignorance and suffering, and would be our worst enemy instead of a perfect guide. So the only way to final peace would be to extinguish God—the cause of all suffering.

There is no logical reason to say that the compassionate God created everything, for his Teachings were shown only to help us achieve happiness. For if he were the creator of all, he would have already created Enlightenment for each living being, and we would already have received it. But this sounds like the imagination of a little baby.

Universal evolution is created by the universal law of karma, created by the beings which inhabit the universe. That's why there is a logical reason for both the universe and its inhabitants.

Shantideva said:

The weapons of the hell beings,
By whom and for whom were they created?
Who laid the foundation of the burning iron?
How did the limitless blaze happen?
All the suffering stages, even such as that one,
Arose from the veil mind.

A beautiful girl is seen in beautiful ways by different people with varying levels of thought. Food tastes differently to different people. It depends on karma, and nothing is created by itself but by the individual mind.

World peace will not result through external development. It does not depend upon reducing noise in the city or hiding in a cave. The only cause that can bring peace to universal beings is to change ourselves into others, to be attached to the comfort of others instead of our own, which we would renounce. The negative thought that cherishes ourselves and not the other is the cause of all suffering and problems.

PRAYER TO BE SAID AFTER MEDITATION THREE

From the Profound Tantric Text, Guru Puja

With this prayer visualise:

Guru Shakyamuni, surrounded by Vajradhara, the Infinite Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Arhants, Dakas and Dakinis, many other Tantric Deities, the Protecting Deities, and all the Holy Gurus in the direct and indirect Lineage of the Teachings, sending much light to me and to all sentient beings, who are visualised as surrounding me.

This light is absorbed into me and into all sentient beings, purifying all negativities and obscurations and bringing all Knowledge—especially the Knowledge that attachment to samsaric pleasures keeps me as if locked in an unbearable prison, and that the Three Trainings and Seven Noble Possessions can bring me to Nirvana.

ZÖ.KA TZÖN.RA DRA.WÄ K'OR.WA.DI
unbearable prison like samsara this
GA.WÄ TSÄL.TAR T'ONG.WÄ LO.PANG.NÄ
desirable as park seeing of mind avoiding and
LAB.SUM P'AG.PÄ NOR.GY'I DZÖ.ZUNG.TE
trainings three noble of possession store by holding
T'AR.PÄ GYÄL.TSÄN DZIN.PAR J'IN.GY'I.LOB
Nirvana of banner to hold please bless

(Please bless me and all sentient beings to bear the banner of Nirvana by holding the store of the Three Trainings and the Noble Possessions, and to avoid seeing the unbearable prison of samsara as a beautiful park.)

After this prayer, complete the visualisation as described on pp. 16-18 and dedicate the merits with the prayer on the last page.